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LIVES

of the

MOST EMINENT LITERARY

AND

SCIENTIFIC MEN

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

VOL. I.



Drawn by D. Bain[illegible]

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LONDON:
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CONTENTS.

LIVES

OF

EMINENT

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC MEN.



ST. COLUMBA.

(521—597.)

THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY AND OF CIVILISATION INTO NORTH BRITAIN.

This celebrated missionary has a place in the present work, not because he was a saint, but because of the influence he exercised over the civilisation of Scotland, and even of Northumbria, that is, of all the English counties north of the Humber and the Mersey. In this, as in many other instances to be hereafter adduced, our business is with the *subject* rather than the *man:* in other words, the former alone has led to the selection; and for that reason we shall have often to insert matter that, were the individual only concerned, might justly be deemed extraneous. But even of the individual, no characteristic features, provided they bear a genuine impress, shall be omitted; for so closely allied is the person with the action, — often no less so than cause with effect, — that the description of the one

must frequently be indispensable to the knowledge of the other.

Though the introduction of Christianity into North Scotland and Northumbria is the most prominent result of St. Columba's labours, we should never lose sight of the fact that they led, in a degree nearly equal, to the civilisation of those regions. The missionary of the middle ages was not merely the preacher, or the administrator of the sacraments; he was the herald of literature, of science, and of human improvement in every shape. To every monastery or cathedral a school was immediately attached, and the children of the more reputable pagans were invited to attend. Parents on whom religious considerations were lost were yet profoundly impressed by the superior knowledge of the missionary; and resolved that their sons should acquire the useful arts, even at the risk of conversion to the new faith. Barbarians as they were, they were sufficiently alive to the improvements introduced by the missionary in reference to those arts, especially to architecture, agriculture, mechanical inventions, surgery, and medicine. Hence it was that after the arrival of St. Augustine in Britain, so great a change was effected in the manners, habits, and condition of the people. By the rule of St. Benedict the practice of agriculture was binding on the monks; and we know that it was equally so, whatever the precise rule to which they were subjected, on the monastic missionaries of Ireland: no wonder, therefore, that in these islands so necessary an art should flourish beyond all former precedent. The most barren districts — and such invariably were those conferred on the church — even exhibited a fertility which at first struck the natives with astonishment. but which immediately gave way to emulation. Plentiful harvests were observed to rise from the fens of Lincolnshire, and to wave on the desert coast of Northumberland, which had hitherto bid defiance to cultivation. In architecture the improvement was no less obvious; while the roads constructed through the deepest marshes, and

the bridges thrown over the most rapid streams, attested in other respects the benefits of civilisation. Nor were these laudable results confined to Britain. The biographers of the early Benedictines in Italy, Gaul, and Spain have shown what degree of improvement was introduced even into the arts inculcated by Roman experience. In Germany, Mabillon has proved how deeply the inhabitants were indebted to the missionaries who, about the age of St. Boniface, carried civilisation from this country to that vast region. The Scandinavian historians have recorded the same results. In short, turn our eyes wherever we may, the same progress from barbarism to improvement is apparent, not in the necessary arts merely, but in the intellectual. Nowhere is this noble effect more visible than in these islands. Well, therefore, might Dr. Johnson term Iona "the luminary of the Caledonian region, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion." The fact is more extensively true than that great writer himself expected, for he was not profoundly versed in our ecclesiastical antiquities. For this reason we shall regard St. Columba and his associates with a reverence which we should refuse to personages merely historic; inasmuch as there can be no just comparison between the regenerator and the destroyer of a people, between the enlightened missionary and the conqueror.*

The Christian religion was introduced into Ireland 432.
by St. Patrick, in the year 432. It has, indeed, been asserted by some modern writers, that the Gospel had flourished in the island before the arrival of that missionary; and one proof adduced is, that Pelagius and his disciple Celestius were both Hiberni-Scoti, or Irishmen. But this would be no proof, even assuming that they *were* Irishmen; for both passed their

* Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica (passim). Lingard, Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 144, &c. Europe during the Middle Ages (Cab. Cyc.), vol. iv. p. 6. Mabillon, Acta SS. Ordinis S. Benedicti, Præfatio ad Sæculum iii. (De Litterarum Studiis per Benedictinos in Germania; necnon De Cultu Soli Germanici per Benedictos). Johnson, Journey to the Western Isles.

lives in foreign lands, and both might have embraced Christianity somewhere else than in their own. But that Pelagius was *not* an Irishman, we have the undoubted authority of St. Augustine*, Prosper of Aquitaine†, Orosius, the venerable Bede, and other authorities, which must, with every unprejudiced reader, set the question at rest; and by legitimate inference we may conclude that Celestius was a Briton from one of the kingdoms north of the Tweed.‡ Another proof adduced is, that Palladius, a dean of the Roman church, was sent as first bishop "to the Scots believing in Christ§," these Scots being assumed to be no other than Hibernians. It should, however, be recollected that the Scots were established in Caledonia no less than in Ireland; and that the term was as properly applied to the former as to the latter. Besides if, as we may clearly infer, not a Christian existed in Ireland when St. Patrick entered on his mission, with what justice could the Irish Scots, or any portion of them, be termed "believers in Christ?" There can be no reasonable doubt that, by the term Scoti in Christum credentes, we are to understand that portion of the Caledonian Scoti who had already embraced Christianity. Yet it is not improbable, as indeed is affirmed by later writers, that the mission of Palladius might have been intended to embrace the whole Scottish nation in both islands; and in this sense he may be called Scotorum apostolus, just as St. Ninian is termed Pictorum apostolus. But he died the very

* Epistola, p. 106.; ad Paulinum Nolanum. Augustine was a personal acquaintance of the heresiarch.

† "Hac tempestate Pelagius *Brito* dogma nominis sui contra gratiam Christi," &c (Chronicon, apud Canisium, Lectiones Ant. pp 1—298)

‡ *Britannicus Noster*, Apologet. contra Pelag. All three were contemporaries of Pelagius.

§ "Pelagium Britonem gratiam Dei impugnavisse." Bede, Libell. de Lex Actat. et Hist. lib i. cap. 10. From St. Jerome (Prœmium ad Prophet. Hieremiæ) we may infer that he was a North Briton, that is, a Briton from the north of the Tweed. He professed at the monastery of Bangor, near Chester.

‖ Mr. Moore (History of Ireland, vol. i. p. 206.) will have both to be Irishmen; and he ingeniously converts the Bangor of Wales into the Bangor near Carrickfergus, though, had he reflected a single moment on the subject, he *must* have remembered that the Irish monastery was not founded in the time of this heresiarch.

¶ "Ad Scotos in Christum credentes."—*Prosperi Chronicon.*

year he was consecrated bishop ; and we have no *con-temporary* authority for believing that he even so much as set foot in Ireland. If this evidence be more favourable to the opinion that Palladius was sent, not to the Hiberni but to the Caledonian Scoti, we may augment it by observing, first, that from the confession of all writers, he died in North Britain ; and secondly, that his two disciples, Servanus and Tervanus, were by him appointed missionaries, not to any region or people of Ireland, but to the Orkneys and the Picts. Had Palladius really laboured in Ireland, would he not have appointed them coadjutors to some diocese in that country? would he and they have laboured so vainly, as not to leave a vestige of success behind them? None could be discovered by St. Patrick or his companions ; yet that success did attend the efforts of Palladius is positively asserted by the chronicler of Aquitaine, who says that while endeavouring to keep the Roman island *catholic* (alluding to his efforts against the heresy of Pelagius, then so prevalent in this island), he had made the barbarous island *Christian*. It is manifest that Prosper could never have applied this strong language to the Irish Scots. Both from authority and from reason we may therefore conclude that St. Patrick was the first Christian missionary who ever preached in Ireland.*

There is no instance on record of a success so astonishing as that which attended the labours of Patrick 432. and his immediate successors. They found a great nation of pagans: before the missionary's death hundreds of thousands had been received into the bosom of the church ; in less than a century universal Ireland was enclosed in the same fold, though this fact

* See, besides the authorities quoted in this paragraph, Baronius, Annales Ecclesiastici (sub annis). Prosperi Aquitani Chronicon, p. 299. (apud Canisium Lect. Ant. tom. i.). Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. i. cap. 13. Centurii Magdeburgensis, cent. v cap. 20. Usserius, De Primordiis, p. 797, &c. (this great writer, however, is opposed to us). Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonicæ, A. D. 431. To us the subject appears to be settled by this learned Jesuit.

Mr. Moore (History of Ireland, vol. i. p. 210.) is also against us. On this subject, however, we should not object to break a lance with him.

not inconsistent with the retention of some ancient superstitions by the new converts. Nor is it less remarkable that before the close of the sixth century, Ireland should boast of names which, whether for piety or learning, had no superiors in the most cultivated regions of the Continent. Monastic schools were established by the apostle of the country; by his disciples they were multiplied and enlarged, until their celebrity was diffused throughout Europe, — until, as we learn from the venerable Bede, the youths of Britain were sent to them for education. Of these, St. Patrick and his disciples founded above a hundred; and a hundred more are said to have been indebted for their existence to St. Columba. Of all the Irish seminaries, that of Banchor, near Carrickfergus, is, perhaps, the best known to the generality of English readers; yet it was not so eminent as the one of St. Finnian at Clonard, which is said to have been attended by 3000 pupils at one time. This fact alone would prove the vast benefit derived by this fiercely barbarous island from the introduction of Christianity; but we might add others — the extinction of a bloody worship, the infusion of a better spirit into the national character, the spread of the useful arts, and the vast improvement in the social no less than in the moral condition of the island. Of this improvement we shall perceive evidence enough in the life of St. Columba.*

521. This life was written by several ecclesiastics, — by some, perhaps, immediately after the death of the subject. Magnus O'Donnell, an Irish friar, who compiled one in Erse early in the sixteenth century, had evidently authorities before him no longer extant; and, about the middle of the following, Colgan was enabled to mention fifteen. Of the ancient ones, however, two only have survived the wreck of time. One of these, by Cummins (Cuminius), his successor, was written between sixty and seventy years after the apostle; — for Columba died in 597, and Cummins governed the monastery of

* Bede, Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. cap. 27. Moore's Ireland, vol. i. chap. 12.

Iona from 657 to 669. The second life was also compiled by an abbot of the same house — Adamnan, who presided over it, and the monasteries dependent on it, from 679 to 704, and who probably executed his task between eighty and ninety years after Columba's death. These undoubted relics of antiquity are, it may be said, sufficiently near to the time of the saint's peaceful career to merit our confidence; yet such, alas! is not the fact. * Both are literally a tissue of miracles, — of miracles astounding as those which signalised the apostolic age. In regard to Cummins this is the more surprising, as he *must* have conversed with men who had personally known the first abbot; for, assuming that he was thirty years old (though more probably he was forty) on succeeding to the government of the establishment, he might, even at twenty years of age, have consulted many who in the prime of life had seen Columba. — Were these miracles really performed? In these days the most credulous Roman catholic in Europe will not answer in the affirmative. Were they invented by the two biographers? Though this is not impossible, to us it appears highly improbable. From internal evidence, we should pronounce both of them to be very good, though very credulous, men. To say that this credulity was inseparable from the period, is scarcely enough; we must also take into consideration the peculiar circumstances of that period. He who is acquainted with the nature of idolatry, in its infinitely varied ramifications; how prolific of wonders, how full of devilry and magic; how the supernatural was interwoven with the thoughts, the feelings, the habits of mankind, — he who has even a mere schoolboy acquaintance with the most common Latin and Greek writers, will be at no loss to account for the universality of superstition *, not only during its unmolested reign, but long after its downfal. If Christianity destroyed the outward form, it could not, except by slow degrees, exorcise the

* "Nam, ut vero loquamur, superstitio fusa per orbem oppressit omnium fere animos, atque hominum occupavit imbecillitatem." — *Cicero.*

concealed spirit. Credulity the most absurd had, in the seventh century, reigned above 2000 years. Could it be exiled by any human means, — by the preaching of bishop or of monk? But neither bishop nor monk endeavoured so much to destroy as to direct the universal feeling of the age. In the first place, they themselves necessarily partook of the same spirit; their minds had been habituated to the reception of wonders, in comparison with which those of Christianity were absolute probabilities: hence they were prepared for the exercise of an ample faith whenever it should be required from them. In the second place, they *knew* that miracles *had been* wrought in the earlier ages of the church; they *believed* that miracles were *still* wrought: nor did their piety permit them to examine, with a keen eye, into the circumstances of such as were daily reported to them. With a yielding faith in regard to paganism, could they have an inferior one in regard to Christianity? They were sure that the devil empowered *his* votaries, that is, all idolators, to display signs and wonders; they could not imagine how their God, the sovereign even of the devil, could consent, by the withholding of similar powers, to see the evil cause triumph. In most chapters of the Old and New Testament they read of miracles; that the lame were made to walk, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the dead to arise; that devils were bodily cast out; that infernal spirits often displayed on earth wonders almost equal to those wrought by the chosen of God; and they fully believed that the power of displaying such wonders still subsisted, granted alike by hell and heaven to their respective servants. The day, indeed, *would* come when this power, in regard to *Satan*, would be destroyed; but that of God's saints would endure for ever. They had Scriptural authority for the fact that the apostles, and the immediate successors of the apostles were favoured with the gift; and they doubted not that its virtue had descended on all the holy missionaries of the Gospel, in the same manner that the mantle of the prophet had

fallen upon his successor. And before we censure them too strongly for this credulity, blind though it often be, let us reflect how impossible the attempt, even in these enlightened times, to ascertain the period when the gift was withdrawn from the church of Christ. Granting, as common reason dictates, that if miracles were absolutely necessary in the promulgation of a new faith, they should not be expected when the faith is established,—that Moses and the prophets must be heard, without expecting that the dead be raised in confirmation of divine truth, — who yet will venture to decide *when* and *where* the supernatural dispensation was revoked? The difficulty of the question is in fact insurmountable. Though we cannot, with the Roman catholic, admit the perpetuity of the miraculous gift; yet, we confess, he might ask us questions which no man could answer, simply because the subjects are above human comprehension. If, he might ask, this gift were necessary in the first century of the Christian era, why not in the fifth, the sixth, nay, in any succeeding century? Had not the Gospel, in the sixth century, for instance, to be preached to men as ignorant of its divine character as were those of the first? If that character could be evinced to barbarous people by wonders only, why should the proof be wanting in one age more than another? And why should that proof be required in some regions only, and held unnecessary in others? Why should it have been vouchsafed in Palestine or Greece, yet withheld in Ireland or Britain?—The difficulty of this subject has disposed several protestant divines, men of extensive learning and clear judgment, to the opinion that miracles have never *wholly* ceased; that though exceedingly few in number, they have, when the occasion has in the eyes of men justified the interposition of Divine Providence, been as evident as in the first age of the church. Though few have gone as far as John Wesley— who, indeed, could not in this respect be exceeded by the most credulous Roman catholics—in asserting that signs and wonders are as rife now as in the apostolic times,

only men do not pay the same attention to them*; yet many believe, with the fathers of the Reformation, that such manifestations, however sparingly vouchsafed, have been, are now, and for ever will be, made. Others again leave the matter in prudent obscurity, — apparently from an unwillingness to inflict the trouble of reflection on themselves or their readers. Thus, in regard to those of St. Columba, Dr. Smith of Campbelton, the only *English* biographer of the saint that we have seen, observes, — "Of these marvellous relations I do not profess to believe any; nor would I be so bold as to deny them all." This is vague enough. He adds, however, with much good sense, — "In circumstances such as those in which Columba stood, called forth to extirpate an old and inveterate superstition, and to establish the true religion upon its ruins, — to surmount the prejudices of a barbarous people, and to contend with powerful and artful priests, we cannot, without presumption, say how far it might be fit that God should countenance the labours of his faithful servant, and vouchsafe him, even by signs and wonders, as he often did to his ministers in such cases, a clear and decided victory. A reflection somewhat similar to this is made by one of his biographers, after mentioning the issue of a contest to which the saint was challenged by the British priests, or druids, before an immense crowd of spectators, near the royal palace at Lochness." To the opinion that on very peculiar occasions the first preaching of the Christian faith to idolatrous nations — whether in the first, or eighth, or tenth, or sixteenth century — was sometimes, however rarely, attended by what are usually called supernatural circumstances, we are, after much reflection, disposed to lean. Such an opinion appears to us the only means of estimating the character of ecclesiastical biographers: either we must admit it, or convict nine tenths of them of wilful, deliberate, systematic falsehood. In regard to some of them — perhaps

* See several volumes of Wesley's Journal, where he talks as coolly and as confidently of casting out devils as the most bigotted monk of the darkest age.

to many — we may observe that such falsehood certainly existed; but we cannot readily persuade ourselves of its existence in respect to others. We cannot believe that men, whose whole lives were one continued sacrifice to what they conceived a duty — who renounced every enjoyment, every comfort, every convenience, almost every necessary of life — who voluntarily assumed incessant labour, poverty, exile, hunger, exposure to stripes, contempt, and death — who worked for the good of others, and who at length sealed their profession by a voluntary martyrdom — *could* die with lies on their lips. It may be replied, that in the marvellous relations they have left us they were the dupes of their own credulity. But this could not be the case where those relations rest, not on hearsay, but on their own authority alone; where they profess to have been the witnesses, and sometimes the subjects, of the manifestations. As we cannot, without a monstrous outrage on probability, accuse them of imposture, we are compelled to conclude either that they were partially, at least, insane, or that such manifestations were really made. To many cases, no doubt, — perhaps even to a majority, — the former test may be admitted; yet a few will remain to which it is inapplicable. It is for the critical historian to judge where imposture, where credulity, where partial madness, where a divine visitation is to solve the enigma. To err on the side of unbelief is, in general, the safest. That credulity is amazingly creative, even where it has no foundation on which to rest, we all know: how much more creative where there *is* one! Assuming, for instance, that one single miracle could be proved — or, which is the same thing, admitted as proved — of any one saint, common fame would speedily multiply it a hundred-fold. This exaggeration takes place in ordinary life; it did take place, in a degree immeasurably greater, in the hagiology of the church. We have only to bear this fact in mind — a fact confirmed by the universal literature of antiquity and the middle ages, and we shall seldom

err even if we admit the occasional interposition by Heaven in the affairs of men.*

521 to 563. St. Columba was born in 521, in the barony, we are told, of Kilmacrenan. He was of royal extraction, his father being the great grandson of Nial, the most powerful king in Ireland; and the mother of his father, Phelim, being the daughter of Lorn, who reigned over the Dalrendini, or Scots of Caledonia.† He could not come into the world without some extraordinary indication from heaven in regard to his future eminence. His mother, while pregnant, dreamed that a majestic personage presented her with a veil of wonderful beauty; but immediately removing it, suffered it to be blown away by the winds; and as it approached the bounds of the horizon, it was expanded so as to cover mountain and dale, forest and stream. On her inquiring why she was so speedily deprived of the treasure, he replied that it was too precious to remain with her.‡ The youth had, in regard to learning, all the advantages — and they were not few — which his age and country afforded. His inclination towards the church, — the result of the pious habit of mind infused by his ecclesiastical teachers, who were always glad to secure to themselves the scion of a princely house — was early manifest; and it seems to have encountered no opposition from his parents, but on the contrary to have been encouraged by them. This circumstance speaks volumes as to the influence which Christianity already exercised over the highest persons in the land, when little more than half a century had elapsed since the death

* Colgani, Vitæ SS passim. Pinkerton, De Vitis SS. Scotiæ, *Præf.* Canisium, Lectiones Antiquæ, tom. i p. 674, &c Centuriæ Magdeburgensis (in Vita S. Columbæ). Bollendistæ, Acta SS., Die Sept. 15. AlforMus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonicæ, tom. ii. an. 563, &c. Smith, Life of St. Columba, p. 3 John Wesley's Journal (multis locis)

† So, at least, we learn from the Irish annals; but whether they are entitled to perfect confidence may well be doubted. *We* do not believe that the kingdom of the Scots was in existence at this time. See note hereafter, p 15.

‡ This fable was probably invented after the saint's death. One, very similar, is related of St. Columbanus, the celebrated contemporary of this saint. The lives of both have often been confounded. See Jonas, Vita S. Columbani (apud Surium, De Probatis Sanctorum Vitis, Die xx. Novemb. tom. iv. p. 497, &c.).

of Ireland's great apostle. The moral revolution must indeed have been complete which could thus induce a proud military family to sanction the entombment of a hopeful son in the cloister. It was not difficult to foresee that a youth so eager for knowledge, so steadfastly bent on the monastic profession, and so pure in morals as Columba was, would one day be the brightest ornament of his country; and his preceptor, St. Finnian*, abbot of Clonard, in whose renowned school he studied, may, without the gift of prophecy, have predicted his future eminence. In fact, all his teachers beheld him with the same fond partiality, and treated him rather as a friend than as a pupil. One who had saints for his preceptors and saints for his companions, and who, while young, was called a saint himself (the word, however, was much more easily applied in this than in subsequent periods), was sure to act in accordance with the deep impress he had received. At the proper age he entered into deacon's orders; and as he had long before passed his noviciate, and taken the monastic vows, he combined within him the twofold character of monk and priest, — a combination, indeed, frequent enough in that age and country. The last of his teachers was St. Ciaran, who had founded the monastery of Clon, and with whom he remained until he himself founded a monastery in his turn. Of Ciaran's memory he always spoke with the deepest affection; and that he himself was equally beloved may be inferred from the boundless acclamations with which he was received when he visited it at a subsequent period of his life. It was, we are told, in his twenty-eighth year that he called into existence the convent of Doir Colgach, from which the modern Derry took its name. The estimation in which he was held might well justify such a step; and the prosperity of his establishment soon emboldened him to build

* St. Finnian is honoured by the title of "Magister Sanctorum." Some scores of his pupils were worshipped as saints. It is singular that he, and many abbots of the period, were also bishops. Ware says of him, that he was "philosophus et theologus insignis." He died in 552.

another, that of Dairmagh, or Plain of the Oaks, in the southern district of the ancient Meath. Many other monastic establishments are inscribed to him by ecclesiastical writers. Joscelin, monk of Furness, in his biography of St. Patrick, states the number at one hundred, and this is adopted by Usher and others; while O'Donnell raises it to *three* hundred. The truth, however, is, that his religious foundations, and many events of his life, have been confounded with those of his contemporary, St. Columbanus, who, in piety, learning, and zeal, was his equal. Indeed, as there were *many* saints named Columba and Columbanus, we have a suspicion that the actions of a dozen have been ascribed to the celebrated abbot of Iona. That he was neither in England, nor Gaul, nor Italy, may safely be inferred from the silence of his two biographers and of the venerable Bede. Columbanus was in all three; hence the confusion of persons and dates; a confusion into which most biographers of the two missionaries have fallen, though the distinction was indicated long ago by Baronius, Ware, Usher, Alford, Fleury, and many others.* But if Columba did not effect all the great deeds attributed to him by subsequent writers, he surely performed enough for one man. That he must, for instance, have founded many convents (each of course with a church and school) is evident from the fact that the one which he afterwards built in Iona was the acknowledged head of all the rest; and that the monks of this establishment were despatched to govern the filial congregations dependent on it, both in Scotland and Ireland.†

* Into this great blunder a writer has fallen this very year, — Mr. Greenwood, of Durham University, in his History of the Germans. It was more inexcusable in Dr. Smith, who devoted a whole volume to the apostle of the Picts.

† Cuminius, Vita S. Columbæ, cap. 1, 2, 3. (apud Pinkerton, Vitæ SS. Sectiæ). Adamnanus, Vita ejusdem, lib. iii. cap 1, 2, 3, &c. (apud Canisium, Lectiones Antiquæ, tom. i.). Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. iii. cap. 4. Waræus, De Scriptoribus Hiberniæ, lib i. p. 14. Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonicæ, tom. ii. A. D. 565. Usserius, De Primordiis Ecclesiorum Britannicarum, p. 687, &c. Baronius, Annales Ecclesiastici (sub annis). Fleury, Histoire Ecclésiastique, tom. vi. p. 560.

In 563, Columba, with twelve monks, removed from Ireland to the little island of Iona, granted to him, we are told, by Conal, king of the Scots, a prince of his own family.* The reasons which induced him to bid adieu to a country that afforded a field sufficiently wide for his most zealous exertions, have been the subject of much dispute. The only allusions which can by any degree of ingenuity be connected with it, occur in Adamnan, who tells us that he was once excommunicated by the synod for some trivial causes (pro quibusdam venialibus et excusabilibus causis); and that he left the country in two years after the "*Culedrebine bellum.*" Whether either event had any influence on his departure may be doubted; yet a story has been raised upon them by a subsequent biographer, deserving of a moment's attention. In it we are told that the saint having had the courage to reproach Dermid, "monarch of all Ireland," with the injustice of a decision, and that too in presence of the assembled people, the anger of the king was so much roused that he vowed to make war on all the kindred of Columba, and reduce them to bondage; that he collected a considerable army for the purpose; that Columba, with his kindred, meet him in arms, victory declared for the latter; that the saint was excommunicated, or 563.

* We again express our doubts on this subject. The island *might* belong to the *Irish* Scots, but, more probably, to the *Picts*. Bede expressly asserts that it belonged to the latter; but the ancient Irish annals affirm that it belonged to the Scots. If so, it must have been the Scots of *Ireland*. Where shall we find room for the *Caledonian* Scots? We have the location of the northern, and that of the southern, Picts; but where shall we place the Scottish *kingdom?* Mr. Moore (History of Ireland, CAB. CYC vol. i. p. 234) says, in "the Western Isles, and the whole of the mountainous district now called Argyleshire." But he has no authority for the assertion beyond that (such as it is) of the Irish annalists; and certainly we find no allusion to such a kingdom in Adamnan, or any ancient biographer of St. Columba. Yet had it existed, on the very confines of the monastic establishment, could it have been passed over in silence? This is the more improbable, as in several places we read of the kings of *Scotia* (Ireland), which is clearly distinguished from *provincia Pictorum*, or what we now call Scotland. There is even a king of the Orkneys mentioned, a vassal of Brude's. As to the *Aidan*, who is represented to have been king of the British Scots, he was manifestly an *Irish* king.—*Adamnan*, lib. iii. cap. 5.

That the Scots (Hibernici) were in Scotland long before the time of Columba, is historically true; but of a *kingdom*, founded by them prior to the eighth century, we have no records other than the Irish chronicles. We have little doubt that Iona belonged to the *Picts*.

rather, a sacris interdictus, because, in defiance of the canons, he had put on armour; and that, seeing the scandal he had occasioned, or the ill-will he had engendered between his house and that of Dermid, he resolved to expatriate himself for the remainder of his life. Were this story true, it would remind us of an observation made with much simplicity by Giraldus de Barri — that, owing to the irascible character of the people, their very saints appear to be more vindictive than those of other countries. When it was first published we know not; but it is sufficiently improbable even as we have represented it, divested of its supernatural incidents. We are told, for instance, that an angel, disguised as a giant, led the small band of the saint's kindred against the hosts of Dermid; and that his appearance struck a panic into the assailants, who turned their swords against one another and fled. Possibly, however, there may be some foundation for this legend. If Columba did not appear in the ranks of his kindred, he might have authorised them, or, what is nearly the same thing, been supposed to have authorised them, to resist some encroachment of their enemy; and, influenced by the rumour, a synod might have *suspended* him from the exercise of the sacerdotal functions. Yet it is more reasonable to infer that he left Ireland because he refused to take any share in the feuds of his family, and because he knew that his countrymen in Scotland, and the whole of the northern Picts, were sunk in idolatry. His arrival in Britain, and the success of his labours, are thus related by the venerable Bede: —

"In the year of our Lord's incarnation 565*, when Justin, the successor of Justinian, ascended the imperial throne, there came from Ireland into Britain a

* In this date Bede is mistaken. The saint died in 597; but if, as both Cummins (cap. 16, 17.), and Adamnan (lib. iii. cap. 26.) inform us, he resided thirty-four years on the island, he must have left Ireland in 563. Again, Adamnan (lib. i. cap. i.) tells us that he left in two years after the battle of Culedrebine; and that battle, according to the Irish annals (in O'Conor, Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores, tom. ii., and Usher, De Primordiis, p. 694.) was fought in 561.

presbyter and abbot, Columba by name, distinguished for the monastic observance, both as to the outward form and the spirit: his object was to preach God's word in the provinces of the northern Picts; that is, in those regions which are separated by steep and desolate mountains from the abodes of the southern Picts. Now these southern Picts, below the range of mountains, had, we are told, long before renounced the errors of idolatry and embraced the true faith, through the preaching of St. Ninian, a most reverend bishop and holy man, who, though a Briton by nation, had been duly instructed at Rome in the catholic faith and mysteries. His episcopal see, dedicated to the bishop St. Martin, and renowned alike for its patron and edifice, where his own body and those of many other saints repose, is now in the possession of the English. This place belongs to the Bernician province, and is vulgarly called *Candida Casa*, or White House, because St. Ninian built it of stone, a thing unusual among the Britons.†

"Columba arrived in Britain in the ninth year of Brude, son of Meilochon, king of the Picts, who was a most powerful monarch, and whose people, by his example and preaching, were converted to the faith of Christ: hence he received from them the said island (Iona) as a dependence of his monastery."

From this relation of Bede little doubt can, we think, be entertained that Hy, or Iona, belonged to the Picts. Another circumstance too, which has not obtained the notice it deserves, is, that Columba took possession of the island *after* the conversion of king Brude. Such, at least, is the construction we put on the passage; nor do we see how a different one can be given to it. The missionary, therefore, was not indebted, as the Irish historians would have us believe, to Conal, king of the British Scots, for this valuable gift. There was, as we have before shown, no such kingdom in existence at the

* Whitherne, in Galloway. This is proof enough that the Bernician kingdom of the Saxons extended far to the north: and so did the British kingdom of the same name, long before the Saxons landed in Northumbria.

period in question.* But from whomsoever it was derived, it was admirably adapted for the twofold object of religious meditation and instruction. Its isolation from the feuds of the period, and yet its contiguity to the continent, to which missionaries were perpetually despatched, were inestimable advantages.* Columba founded in the sequel, a monastery and church; but if one relation be true, he had previously to expel the druids, who had long held it.†

From the preceding extract we have seen that the southern Picts had, through the instrumentality of St. Ninian, received the Gospel long before their northern brethren. As our purpose is with the subject rather than the individual,—with the diffusion of Christianity and of civilisation, rather than with the merits of Columba,—we will briefly advert to the labours of St. Ninian, and of his successor St. Kentigern, in the south of Scotland. In fact, the state of that region at the period in question is so little understood, that few readers will blame us for the digression.

Though the Scotch have been extremely anxious to prove the introduction of Christianity into their country soon after the apostolic times, they have miserably failed of success. It would indeed be singular if, as they would intimate, they enjoyed that blessing before the inhabitants of England, which, from its contiguity to Gaul, and its close connection with Christian Rome, would naturally attract the attention of the first missionaries. Probabilities, however, weigh little against national partiality; and Hector Boece, who is followed by Lesley and so many of his nation, gravely assures us that, in the reign of the emperor Severus, application was made to the then pope, by the Scottish king Donald I., for missionaries to instruct and baptise the people; and that in consequence the whole nation entered into the fold of Christ. To this statement there is the trifling objection we have just noticed,—

* See before, page 15.

† Usserius, De Primordiis, p. 902. Alfordus, Annales, tom. ii. p. 75. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. iii. cap. 4.

that the Scottish *kingdom* was not in existence prior to the eighth century. But we will not attempt to expose the absurdity of a chronology which the learning of the great Usher has, in the judgment of every sane mind, exploded for ever. There is no authentic account that the religion of Christ made any progress in the south of Scotland prior to St. Ninian. The time, indeed, when this ecclesiastic lived is somewhat uncertain; unfortunately we have no life of him prior to that written by the abbot Ailred of Rievaulx, in the twelfth century. Though we cannot subscribe to the sage maxim of Ambrosio de Morales, that whatever one saint writes of another saint ought confidently to be received, yet we are disposed to place some reliance on this monastic biographer. In the first place, he had doubtless materials before him which have long perished; next, we learn from the venerable Bede, that long before the preaching of St. Columba—multo ante tempore,—St. Ninian laboured among the southern Picts. We may, therefore, without any outrage to chronology, receive the statement in the life itself,—that he was the contemporary of St. Martin, bishop of Tours, especially as this antiquity is strongly supported by internal probability.*

The relation of his biographer does not enable us to 370.
ascertain the exact period of his birth; but about the to
year 370 he appears to have been a youth. His na- 432.
tive region was probably the district north of the Solway Frith; and his father was one of the British chiefs dependent either on the kingdom of Cumbria, or on that of Strathclyde. Though Christianity was not the prevailing religion of the country, it was certainly known; for Ninian was reared in it. But if we are to believe the biographer, it was a bastard sort of Christianity; so much so, that at an early age Ninian

* Hector Boetius, Scotorum Historia, lib. vi. fol. 86. Leslæus, De Rebus Gestis Scotorum, lib. iii. (in Donaldo I.). Usserius, De Primordiis, p. 610, &c. Bollandistæ, Acta SS. Die Sept. xvi. Ailredus Rievallensis, Vita S. Niniani (apud Pinkertonium, Vitæ SS. Scoticæ). Bede, Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. cap. 4.

was dissatisfied with it, and longed to visit Rome; where alone, at that period, it was to be learned in its purity. At this period many of the noble British youths were sent, we are told, to the eternal city, to be instructed alike in profane and sacred learning. Nor is this improbable, when we recollect that much longer journeys were then undertaken for less important purposes. That in the fourth century pilgrimages from Britain to Jerusalem were frequent, is evident fron St. Jerome, Origen, Epiphanius, and other authorities; and in proof of the concourse of foreign students at Rome, besides St. Augustine and Optatus, we have an imperial brief issued at Treves by the emperor Valentinian, and inserted in the Theodosian code. That Ninian went thither, and studied there, cannot, after the expression of Bede—"erat Romæ regulariter fidem et mysteria veritatis edoctus,"—be disputed, without introducing into history a pyrrhonism fatal to all knowledge, and, we may add, a spirit of sectarianism deserving the severest censure. How long he remained in that city we know not; but his proficiency in the learning of the period, and his piety, must have been considerable, or he would not have been selected by the pope as episcopal missionary to the pagan inhabitants of his own country. He was consecrated, it is said, by pope Sericius in 394; certainly his episcopal dignity must be assigned to a date prior to the death of St. Martin, whom, on his return from Italy to this island,
400. he visited at Tours.* Having been encouraged in his good project by that bishop, he repaired to the scene of his future labours. It is reasonable to suppose that he found some Christians in the place; for he was welcomed by a great concourse of people; and was soon enabled to raise a magnificent cathedral — for magnificent a *stone* church must have been in those

* Hector Boece, *more suo*, makes him the nephew of that renowned prelate; and the same honour has been conferred on St. Patrick by *recent* biographers: but if so, what becomes of Bede's assertion, *natione Brito?* Perhaps it may be said — for what is *not* said? — that the sister of St. Martin was married to the father of Ninian.

days — which was called *Witherne, candida casa,* a white house. This must have been soon after the year 400; for, hearing that Martin was dead, he dedicated it to that saint. He had soon the good fortune to convert the Pictish regulus, or king of the district, Tuduval by name; but probably more by his knowledge of medicine — a knowledge possessed, in a greater or less degree, by every ecclesiastic of the middle ages — than by his preaching. His success was thenceforward rapid; for he is said to have converted the whole of the southern Picts, to have built many churches, to have ordained many priests, and to have divided the whole region into parishes. But this last assertion is incredible, no less than that which makes him the consecrator of bishops. So far, however, as regards the universality of the conversions, the statement of the biographer seems to be confirmed by the words of Bede.* With this result we must be satisfied; for amidst the miracles with which the credulous abbot of Rievaulx has disfigured the relation, we can trace none of the steps by which it was obtained. How Ailred, a man of learning, could relate such puerile miracles, might be subject of surprise, did we not know that far greater minds were influenced by the same failing. Doubtless, as they were transmitted to him by writing no less than tradition, his piety would have revolted at the idea of suppressing them. He believed that the frail nun of Watton † had been miraculously released from her fetters: how then could he demur to the relation that an infant of one day old, the mother of which, at the instigation of the true father, had fixed the paternity on a priest of St. Ninian's cathedral, had, at the command of the holy bishop, opened its mouth, and declared the priest innocent? ‡ Or how could he doubt that one of the bishop's bulls had killed the chief robber of a numerous gang who

* "Australes Picti, relicti errore idololatriæ, fidem veritatis acceperunt."
† See Europe during the Middle Ages (CAB. CYC.), vol. iv. p. 252.
‡ Vita S. Niniani, cap. 5.

attempted to steal the whole flock, and that the compassionate saint had restored the thief to life?* One of his legends is poetical. Having praised the unwearied activity of Ninian, —who never lost a moment, — he says that whenever the saint was eating, or obliged to wait until his mule's strength was recruited, he pulled out a book, and read attentively. Sometimes, while thus occupied in the open air, the rain would freely descend; yet neither he nor his book caught one drop, unless he suffered his mind to wander for a moment, and then indeed both were copiously besprinkled: but he was thereby made sensible of his folly; and no sooner did he resume the profitable train of reflection inspired by his MS.—no sooner did his heart go along with the subject — than, however tempestuous the atmosphere around him, both he and his book were again secure from its fury. It is strange that some of these miracles have been admitted by protestant writers. The authors of the Centuriæ Magdeburgenses affirm this bishop to have been, not only *sanctitate*, but *miraculis clarus*. And this acknowledgment compels father Alford (though, as he asserts, loth to admit miracles in general) to believe them: for would he not be impious indeed if he rejected what even sectarians confess to be true?† But we dismiss both the saint and the idle legends concerning him, by adding that he died in 432, and was buried in his cathedral of Whitherne.‡

514. If we have had reason to complain of much uncertainty in the life of St. Ninian, we have a hundred times more in that of *St. Kentigern*. Of the one as of the other there is no biography extant that can be traced beyond the end of the twelfth century; and

* Vita S. Niniani, cap. 8.

† "Ego sane qui dudum apud me constitui, in rebus mirabilibus recendendis scrupulosus esse, quia modernum cælum illis non favet, tamen ubi sectarii ipsi miracula fatentur, impius sum si illa transeo."

‡ Ailredus Rievallensis, Vita S. Niniani, cap. 1—11. (apud Pinkertonium, Vitæ SS. Scotiæ. Bollandistæ, Acta SS. Die Sept. xvi. Optatus Milovitanus, De Unitate Ecclesiæ, lib. ii. S. Hieronymi Epistola V. ad Florent. Usserius, De Primordiis, p. 202. Bede, Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. cap. 4. Centuriæ Magdeburgenses, cent. v. fol. 1429. Hector Boetius, Historia Scotorum, lib. vii. Alfordus, Annales, tom. i. A. D. 370. 394. 432

Kentigern lived in the age after Ninian. His life, too, was written by one whom we have often suspected to be a knave, — Joscelin, monk of Furness, well known to the learned as the compiler, and to a certain extent, we think, the inventor, of childish legends respecting the renowned saints of former years. Like his predecessor, Kentigern was a native of Britain north of the Tweed,—possibly of the district now called the Lothians. His mother was the daughter of a Pictish king — there can be no rational doubt that the Picts and the Britons were the same people — but though Usher seems inclined to the opinion that her father was Uther Pendragon, and consequently she was the sister of Arthur, few readers will place much reliance on a genealogy where the very existence of the personages has been disputed, and where no learning or criticism can settle the chronology. Unfortunately for the memory of the princess, she was, though unmarried, discovered to be pregnant. That the mother of a saint should be guilty of such a crime, has scandalised many holy churchmen ; and attempts have been made to vindicate her from it. One, after describing her devotion to the Virgin, tells us that she presumptuously wished, and even prayed, to be also favoured by a supernatural conception ; and that in course of time, finding that she had indeed conceived, she rejoiced in the simplicity of her heart at what she regarded a heavenly visitation.* But here the grave biographer, recollecting that the very notion of such a visitation was blasphemy against Christ, cautiously adds, that what she carried in her womb was undoubtedly the fruit of human intercourse. Seeing how unsuccessful was this mode of defence, another writer, from her repeated and solemn declaration that she had never known man, is sure that she had been abused in her sleep, and had remained wholly unconscious of the fact. But had she been the victim of a man, or of something more than

* Though she implored the celestial aid, she did not neglect the human means.

man? This was a grave question, which, as it concerned a favourite popular superstition, was resolved in the popular manner. The author of a very ancient romance, that of Merlin, assures us, on the authority of "David the prophet and Moses," that when the angels who rebelled under Lucifer were thrust from heaven, and were transformed from angels of light into "fiendes black," all were not so unfortunate as to reach the lowest depths: some were allowed to remain in the middle air, and ever since they have been on the watch to tempt mankind. As they can assume any shape at will, and be insinuating enough when they have a purpose to gain, we cannot be much surprised at their frequent success, especially over women. And if they could not succeed openly, they were cunning enough to wait for secret opportunities, as when sleep or lassitude rendered the victim unprepared to resist. Geoffrey of Monmouth — a believer, as every ancient Briton was, in this notable superstition — thus alludes to it in his Vita Merlini: —

> Et sibi multoties ex aëre corpore sumpto
> Nobis apparent, et plurima sæpe sequuntur;
> Quin etiam coitu mulieres aggrediantur,
> Et faciunt gravidas, generantes more profano."

Merlin was the offspring of such a connection; and so, according to the vulgar, was Kentigern. But the demons of the air had power over such ladies only as were unprepared, — such as had forgotten to say their prayers, or were in a state of mortal sin; yet how could this be the case in regard to one so devout towards the Virgin as the princess in question? She must therefore, as Joscelin affirms, have been abused by some *mortal* in her sleep. There is another ancient life (quoted by Pinkerton) of St. Kentigern, which affirms that she had a *lover;* it even mentions his name (Ewen), and probably *he* was the author of the mischief, but as she would not listen to his sighs because he was a pagan, he may, in revenge or in despair, have watched his opportunity as narrowly as a demon would have done,

and at length effected his purpose. We are in charity bound to admit this mode of solving so grave a problem; for who will be so profane as to suspect any thing discreditable in the generation of a saint? After all, we may content ourselves with the reflection of another ecclesiastical biographer, — that it is of little consequence who scattered the seed, since God gave the increase.* The father of the princess, however, was not so charitable; he swore that she should be tried for her life: but as he was a pagan (so, indeed, were all his courtiers), and displeased with her for embracing the Christian religion, we have the key to his severity. This severity will appear the greater, when we remember how dreadfully the pagans visited every violation of chastity. Those of Britain threw the woman from the summit of a precipice, and beheaded the man; while the Saxons buried *her* alive, and hung *him* over her grave.† The monk Joscelin, barbarous as he considers this law, pays a just tribute to pagan chastity, which, he acknowledges, far surpasses that of the Christians in his day. If he is not, as monks frequently are, indulging in a rhetorical flourish, this virtue was not much practised in the twelfth century. "Now either sex, and every condition, run into the swine-trough of beastly pleasures, with great willingness because with perfect impunity." ‡ But some of our Roman catholic friends may reply, if this was true of the laity, it was not of the clergy. Alas! if the biographer speak truth — and surely monks will not lie! — the latter were as

* Apud Capgravium, Nova Legenda Sanctorum: — "Quis aut quomodo sator terram araverit, seu severit, cum Domino dante benignitatem, terra fructum optimum protulerit, absurdum sane diutius indagare arbitramur." A very pious sentiment!

† "Erat in illo populo barbaro, a diebus antiquis, lex promulgata, ut puella quæ in paternis fornicatis gravida inveniebatur, de supercilio montis altissimi præcipitaretur; corruptor autem ejus capitis plecteretur. Similiter apud antiquos Saxones, pene usque ad moderna tempora sancitum durabat, ut quælibet virgo in paternis sponte deflorata, absque ulla retractatione, viva sepeliretur, violator vero ipsius supra sepulchrum ejus suspenderetur." — *Joscelinus.*

‡ "Ecce omnis sexus, omnis conditio, in omne volutabrum carnalis colluvionis, pene tam licenter quam libenter, quia impune, immergitur." — *Vita S. Kentigerni*, cap. 2.

guilty as the former: "For not only the common herd of mankind are polluted by this vice, but even they who are supported by ecclesiastical benefices, and occupied in the holy offices of religion." * This, if true, is melancholy; and the only hope for such a generation is that *faith* must do for them what good works should have done. But the pagan king, living in a dark period, and ignorant of the privileges reserved for Christians in brighter and happier times, would not allow the crime, though in a daughter, to remain unpunished. His council, consisting no doubt of many druids, was assembled, and the law of the country was commanded to be fulfilled. The princess was led to the summit of a precipice—said to be the present Dunpelder in Lothian — and scarcely was she allowed to invoke her virgin patroness, when she was hurled from the eminence. But her prayer had been effectual; for she fell to the ground harmless! All present were astounded at this unexpected result, but all were not affected in the same degree: some exclaimed that she was innocent, others that she was a witch. Her father, who probably thought that there was some connection between Christianity and magic, now commanded that she should be placed in a small boat, made of frail bark, on the sea, and left to her fate. Here again, we suppose, her patroness befriended her; for the boat was carried by the waves to the coast of Fife, where she landed in the neighbourhood of Kilross. This is a proof that she was exposed on the eastern coast of Scotland, and that her father's petty state comprised one or all of the three countries between the Frith of Forth and the Tweed. †

514 to 560. It was fortunate for the princess that she was driven

* "Et non solum vilissimum vulgus tali contagio polluitur, verum hii qui ecclesiasticis beneficiis sustentati, et divinis officiis applicati." — *Vita S. Kentigerni.*

† Joscelinus Farnesensis, Vita S. Kentigerni, cap. 1—4. (apud Pinkerton, Vitæ SS. Scotiæ, p. 200, &c.). Usserius, De Primordiis, p. 681, &c. Capgravius, Nova Legenda Sanctorum (in Vitâ S. Kentigerni). Alfordus, Annales, tom. ii. p. 16. The Romance of Merlin, part i. (in Ellis's Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, vol. i.) Galfridus Monmuthensis, Vita Merlini (apud Ellis, vol. i. sect. 4.). Europe during the Middle Ages (CAB. CYC.), vol. iv. p. 68.

to Kilross; for the place was honoured by the sanctity of St. Servanus, disciple, we are gravely assured, of Palladius. But that bishop died in 432; so that, if he lived to witness not merely the birth (514) but the manhood of Kentigern, he must have lived to a marvellous age. And, indeed, there are some writers who, to reconcile the consecration of Servanus as bishop to the Orkneys (431) and his interview (to be noticed hereafter) with St. Columba, do protract his life to near two centuries. It is evident that this Servanus and the disciple of Palladius were distinct persons: all that we can with certainty know of the present one is, that he was the head of a very flourishing college. On the morning of the princess's arrival, both he and his disciples were much surprised by the sound of heavenly music in the air; and it was also heard by some shepherds, who, proceeding to the shore, found that the princess had just been delivered of a son. Both were taken to Servanus, who thenceforward provided for them. The son was educated with great care and great affection. He is of course very pious, as every future saint ought to be; yet he cannot escape the enmity of his schoolfellows. They cannot bear that he should always be called by the bishop "*Munghu!*" (my dear!) hence his vulgar name among the Scotch to this day — *St. Mungo*, by which he is better known than by his baptismal one of Kentigern.* So great is their enmity, which even his miracles cannot remove, that he resolves, unknown to his master, to leave the college, where there can be no harmony so long as he remains. He had not advanced far before he reached a deep, rapid river; but such obstacles were nothing to our saint, who passed through, dry-shod, with as much ease as Moses and Elijah in days of yore. Nor is this all; for the complaisant river, Malina, which had turned back its waters into another river, *Ledo*, so as to leave its channel empty, would never resume its ancient course; but from that day to the present both it and the Ledo have been

* *Ken*, a head; *tyern*, a chief.

commingled and confounded. It is sometimes useful to explain what so many ages have considered miraculous: here there is no miracle, but a natural phenomenon. In vain may any one look for the *Malina* and the *Ledo;* they are no rivers, and they merely signify the flux and reflux of the ocean current.* Kentigern arrived at the estuary when the tide was ebbing out, and was thereby enabled to wade over: he proceeded across the kingdom to the vicinity of the Clyde, where he was sure to find an ample field for his missionary labours. At this time, indeed, there was a struggle every where in Scotland between expiring idolatry and the rising faith of Christ. The converts whom St. Ninian had left had probably perpetuated the new faith in their own families; but we do not find that, between the period of the two missionaries, any ecclesiastic had obtained much distinction in the same arduous path of duty. The number of true believers bore little proportion to that of the pagans; though there were certainly districts in which the former greatly preponderated, just as there were others in which it would have been difficult to find any Christians at all. The king of the region, however, in which he settled — that around, or probably to the south of, Glasgow, — was a Christian; and there were some clergymen; but their flocks were small, and they were without a bishop.

* For this explanation we are indebted to Usher (De Primordiis, p. 675.), whose erudition nothing can escape: —

" In qua narratione illud scriptores fugit, *Malinæ et Ledonis* vocabula, non ejus nominis fluvios aliquos, sed crescentes et decrescentes Oceani æstus denotari: *qui alternante per septenos octanosve dies successu mensem inter se quem quadriformi suæ mutationis varietate dispertiunt.* Minores enim æstus *Ledones* sunt dicti: quia *quinta luna similiter et a vicesima incipiunt; et quot horis accedunt, tot recedunt. Malinæ sunt majores: quæ a tertiadecima et vicesimaoctava luna incipiunt, et sex diebus et quindecim horis durant; et sunt citiores in accedendo, tardiores in recedendo.* Ita Venerabilis Bede. Et ante eum, auctor librorum de Mirabilibus sacræ Scripturæ. *Quotidiana inundatio bis in die, a tempore ad tempus, per horas viginti quatuor semper peragitur: et per alternatas hebdomadas Ledonis et* Malinæ vicissitudo comitatur. *Sed Ledo sex horas inundationis et totidem recessus habet: Malina vero grandis per quinque horas ebullit et per septem horas lictorum dorsa relegit.* Ledonis etiam et Malinæ meminerunt, Willibaldus in fine Vitæ Bonifacii. Actorum Rumoldi et Gummeri Scriptores; et Rogerus Hovedenus, *Lindim* Northumbriæ fluviolum ita describens. *Lindis dicitur flumen quod in mare excurrit duorum pedum latitudinem habens quondo Ledon fuerit: id est minor æstus et videre potest: quando vero Malina fuerit, id est major, tunc nequit Lindis videri.*"

Kentigern was, in his twenty-fifth year, elected to the dignity by the king, the clergy, and the people, who admired the sanctity of his life, and the superiority of his attainments. But who was to consecrate him? There was not a bishop in all Scotland; a fact that proves either that the success of St. Ninian has been much exaggerated, or that religion had lamentably retrograded since his day. We read, indeed, of frequent apostacy among the Britons of South Scotland; and the relation is credible. Here the Christianity was associated with many druidical notions. Llywarch Hen, Merlin, Taliessin, and Aneurin,—all British poets of this period, and of this region, and all, nominally at least, of the true faith,—contain, in some of their extant compositions, so many allusions to pagan doctrine as to be nearly unintelligible to the most learned antiquary. It was, indeed, a melancholy period; the more so, as in England the Saxons had probably not left one bishop alive wherever their power extended. One, it is said, was brought expressly from Ireland for the consecration of Kentigern; but how *one* could be sufficient for the purpose, when the canons of the church universal demanded *three*, may surprise the ecclesiastical reader. But this was in the manner of the Britons (more Britonum et Scotorum), and there is reason why it should have been tolerated at an age when two bishops were not to be found in the same kingdom. Add that he was only twenty-five years of age, though the canons insisted on thirty, and we may doubt whether his consecration was valid. He himself seems to have been of the same opinion; for at an advanced period of life he went to Rome to procure, from the apostolic authority of Gregory the Great, not only absolution for himself, but a plenary confirmation of all the acts he had performed while spiritual governor of Glasgow. But whatever irregularity might attend his introduction into the episcopal order, his conduct in it appears to have been excellent,—if, indeed, we except the useless austerities which he practised. That he should eat only once in

three days; that he should wholly abstain from wine and meat, satisfying hunger with bread, butter, cheese, and milk; that he should wear a sackcloth next his skin; that his bed should be a hollow stone, and a stone his pillow; that ashes and flints, instead of good heath or wool, should be laid at the bottom of this stone trough; that when he awoke he should plunge into the frigid waters of the river, and there in a standing posture repeat the psalter, may cause us to smile or to mourn at the fantastic nature of enthusiasm. Far better pleased are we with other parts of his episcopal portrait; as when, in his plain hood and stole, with his crosier of unadorned wood in one hand, and a manual of ecclesiastical offices in the other, he proceeded from place to place on foot, ever ready to discharge the duties of his office. But with all his diligence, his sanctity, and, we are told, his miracles, he could not sway the intractable spirits of the British chiefs. Some hated him for his subversion of the pagan altars, others for his reproval of their crimes. One day king Morkan, though a Christian, was so incensed as to kick the saint; but he paid dearly for the insult; the royal foot swelled, a mortification ensued, and the owner went to join the fraternity to which he belonged; while the adviser and witness of the kick broke his neck. But the death of Morkan was unfortunate for the saint: whether there was a disputed succession, or whether the British chiefs were resolved to restore paganism, we know not; but having spurned every law divine and human, and having laid waste the country, they conspired against his life. But he had warning of the mischief, and he fled, resolving to consult with the renowned St. David on his duty at such a crisis. The seat of that bishop (Menevia) was far distant, yet Kentigern, we are told, travelled the whole way on foot, proceeding by the sea-side. At Carlisle he converted many idolaters to the true faith; and continued his missionary labours wherever they were required. After a painful journey he reached Menevia, where he was received as became his

virtues and sufferings: but St. David did not advise him to return to his own flock. He therefore determined to remain in Wales; and, as the southern regions of the country were so actively superintended by that bishop, he proceeded into North Wales, and established himself near the river Elwy, in Flintshire. From the king of the country, Cadwaller, he obtained a grant of the land; and a cathedral arose on the site now occupied by that of St. Asaph. Nor was this all; for he soon erected a monastery able to contain 965 monks! His biographers do not condescend to inform us by what means he raised such vast edifices, nor for what reasons so much religious fervour subsisted in this wild region, when every where else it was nearly extinct. But improbabilities meet us in every page; and though we see enough to be convinced that the foundation is true, we also perceive that wanton invention has raised the superstructure of the story. This multitude of inmates required arrangement and control; and Kentigern, at once the abbot and bishop, was capable of both. Of these, 300 were illiterate, and were therefore subjected to agricultural and pastoral labour; 300 more, who appear also to have been illiterate, were employed in the menial labours of the interior; and 365, who were learned men, were at once monks and priests, and were constantly devoted to the offices of religion. There was no intermission of the public worship: when one service was completed another was commenced; day and night were equally devoted to the same duty; and, consequently, the establishment was a little heaven. One of the ecclesiastics, Asaph by name, excelled all the rest in devotion; so that when Kentigern returned, as at length he did, through the persuasion of Roderic (Rhydderch), king of Cumbria, to his original flock at Glasgow, he left the saint to fill his place as abbot and bishop. It was indeed time, as the king observed in language filled with just reproach, that he should repair to Glasgow, for the inhabitants were every where relapsing into idolatry, and their state demanded the pre-

sence of their bishop. "It was shameful," added the king, "that the bridegroom should forsake the bride, the shepherd his flock, the bishop his church, for whose good, if he were not a hireling, he should sacrifice even his life." Stung by the well-deserved remonstrance, Kentigern resolved to obey the summons, the more willingly as his personal enemies were dead. In future there would be no lack of priests, if, as we are gravely assured, he took with him 665 of the monks.*

560. On his approach to Glasgow, he was met by the king and a great multitude. One of his first cares was to banish the gentile priests and all who followed them; and in this, as in every other, he was zealously assisted by the king. If we could place much reliance on the relations of Joscelin and other biographers, we might incidentally derive some interesting facts from the perusal. Who, for instance, was this king? He was named Rhydderch, or Roderic; and as both the reign and chronology correspond, he must doubtless be the prince whom Geoffrey of Monmouth makes the brother-in-law of Merlin. But there is other and better authority for his existence than that of Geoffrey, since he is expressly mentioned as Rhydderic the Generous by more than one British bard of the sixth century. This fact is important: it adds confirmation to some parts at least of Joscelin's narrative; and in the same degree it may be admitted as strengthening the antiquity of the bards themselves. And as their bards were natives, or at least inhabitants of the British states in the north (there were at the period of Ida's descent in Northumbria many such states) they were not likely to be mistaken in the name, especially when we add that all were warriors, and all, at one time or other, fought under the banner of their princes, now against the common enemy the Saxons, now against one another. Again, among the idols which

* Joscelinus Furnesensis, Vita S. Kentigerni, cap. 4—32. (apud Pinkerton, Vitæ SS. Scotiæ). Capgravius, Nova Legenda (in Vita ejusdem). Alfordus, Annales, tom. ii. pp. 47. 57. 69. Usserius, De Primordiis, pp. 564. 691. Bollandistæ, Acta SS. Die Feb. xiii.

the Britons, during the absence of Kentigern, had worshipped, and which that bishop, on his return, demolished, that of Woden is mentioned. At the first view, it would seem unlikely that the Britons should acknowledge any deity worshipped by the detested Saxons; and, indeed, we cannot believe that they did. The relation of Kentigern's assuring the inhabitants that this pretended deity was once a man, and a Saxon king, that his body was long before resolved into dust, and his soul in the everlasting fires of hell, may be true enough; but Britons must not have constituted the bishop's auditory on this occasion. Probably he was preaching to a mixed people, or to some colony descended from Scandinavian or Germanic sires. A statement more interesting still — if, as Usher observes, we could rely on it — is, that Kentigern preached to the Saxons of the Bernician kingdom no less than to the Britons; and this would account for the statue of Woden being found with other statues. We see nothing improbable in the relation: where the Britons voluntarily submitted, they were spared, and, for some time after the arrival of the Saxons, were allowed to retain their religious worship: hence the two nations must, in some places, have been mixed together; and the bishop could not preach to the one without encountering the other. The notion that the Saxon invaders (who descended on the Northumbrian coast in 547, that is, about the thirty-fourth year of Kentigern's life, and about thirteen years prior to his return from St. Asaph) exterminated the natives wherever they could be found, is a vulgar error, contrary at once to reason and to authority. It was unreasonable that a handful of adventurers should have been sent to exasperate a people so much superior in number, and nearly equal in valour; and this rashness was, especially, unlikely to be exhibited by the Saxons, whose cunning is the frequent theme of ancient British writers. Had they given way to such an impulse,— on the contrary, had they not proceeded with great caution and great policy, they would,

notwithstanding the divisions and civil feuds of the native princes, have been driven back to their ships. That prior to the event they uniformly demanded submission, tribute, and hostages, is evident from the relics of the British bards, — the only historic authorities we have for the events of this period. — Thus Taliessin in his account of the battle of Argoed Llwyfain, in which Urien, king of Reged, fought against the Flamddwyn (most probably the Saxon Ida), distinctly mentions this demand on the part of the invaders, and its indignant refusal by Urien and his sons. Allusion to it is also to be found in Llywarch Hen and Merlin (Merddin), if not in Aneurin. If, then, where the natives submitted they were spared, and even suffered to retain their religious worship, — until, at least, the Saxons were powerful enough to set rebellion at defiance,— we can see no reason to dispute the relation of Joscelin, who had doubtless, ancient authorities before him that Kentigern threw down the statues of Woden, and, by inference, that he preached to the Saxons. Yet, we would not derive from this circumstance the same hypothetical conclusion as Usher, — that this bishop was the first missionary of the Angles. He probably never entered their territory except in search of his peculiar flock (the Picts or Britains); and if they happened to be present at his vehement denunciations of idolatry, or if he found idols,—Woden among the rest, — in the church where the natives had been accustomed to worship, his zeal for the true faith would unquestionably stimulate him to address the foreigners together with them. Whether he succeeded or not in making converts among the Saxons, is a different question: the probability, notwithstanding the mistaken zeal of father Alfred, is that he did. Nor would this circumstance, as the learned annalist supposes, detract from the noble fame of St. Augustine and his companions. If there were such conversions, they must have been few: for when Christianity was preached by the successors of the Anglo-Saxon apostle in the vast

region called Northumbria, the inhabitants, both Saxon and British, were found to be pagan. Many Christians there doubtless were, north of the Tweed; and we may even presume that the majority of the inhabitants were in the faith of Christ; but that even in Bernicia many pagans might be discovered down to the eighth, if not the ninth century, is an historic fact.*

But, to hasten over the remaining actions of St. 560
Kentigern, whatever the spiritual condition of these to
regions at a subsequent period, there can be no doubt 601.
as to the zeal with which he laboured for the diffusion of Christianity. It was to devise the best and speediest means of effecting the common object that St. Columba and himself had the interview in Glasgow, so celebrated in the ecclesiastical biographers of Scotland. This interview, though it rests merely on the testimony of Kentigern's biographer, is not to be rejected: John of Tinmouth, Capgrave, Joscelin, concur in relating it; and the relation is to us exceedingly valuable, as it fixes, beyond all controversy, the age of St. Kentigern. His familiarity with St. David might be a fable, or the chronology of St. David's life might be called in question; and we might even be provoked to reject the account of his journey to Rome for the purpose we have already mentioned. But there is no disputing the concurrent testimony of the three biographers, supported as it is by that of Hector Boetius, and containing in the relation circumstances too minute to be the invention of a later age. Nor, indeed, do we absolutely deny that the bishop of Glasgow did go, in 593, to consult St. Gregory on the affairs of his diocese. This event is affirmed by the biographers already mentioned; and the only objection we can see to it is the interest which all would have in making the country dependent on the see of Rome at the earliest period.

* Capgravius, Nova Legenda (Vita S. Kentigerni). Joscelinus Furnesensis, Vita ejusdem; et Alfordus, ubi suprà. Owen Pugh, Translation of Llyward Hen, passim. Turner, History of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. p. 303., and Appendix to vol. iii., in the Vindication of the Ancient British Bards. Usserius, De Primordiis, p. 686.

For the same reason it is sure to be rejected by other writers. The safest course is to place no dependence on it. As little would we place on the story that Roderic, the British king of Cumbria, did homage to the bishop for his kingdom, for no other alleged reason than this, — that as God prospered every thing belonging to the saint, so the kingdom must prosper when under his protection. From that day, says Joscelin, the British kings were always vassals of the bishops of Glasgow: hence, the saint's name, *Kentigern*, the head of chiefs, — a name, too, prophetically applied by Servanus on his baptism. The fable is too manifest, the imposture too gross, to be further exposed. If we add, that the bishop died in 601, we shall have done all the justice our limits will allow us, both to him and his labours.*

563 Such was the state of religion among the southern
to Picts when St. Columba proceeded to the conversion of
597. the northern.† Notwithstanding the assertion of some writers, that so early as the fifth century a bishop was converted by Palladius, and sent to convert the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands, we may doubt whether a single missionary had ever crossed the Grampians when the Irish saint commenced his labours. Hector Boece, indeed, contends that a Christian monastery existed in Iona itself, a century and a half before his arrival. Nay, we are gravely told that the Scottish king, Fergus, being the ally of Alaric the Goth in the sack of Rome, brought to Scotland, and deposited in Iona, many valuable manuscripts; and that from his day the island became the cemetery of the Scottish kings! Nor is he the only writer of the nation who makes the same assertion. They should have informed us by what disastrous course of circumstances the monastery and churches were so completely destroyed that no traces of their existence, any more than of Christianity itself, could be discovered in the island. On the contrary, in

* Joscelinus Furnesensis, Vita S. Kentigerni, cap. 33, &c. Capgravius, Vita ejusdem, ubi suprà. Hector Boetius, Historia Scotorum, lib. ix. fol. 163. Usserius, De Primordiis; et Alfordus, Annales, ubi suprà.

† See before, p. 17

one of the accounts of St. Columba's life, inserted by Colgan, we read that this missionary, as before intimated, had to expel the druids before he could settle in the island. And the relation is confirmed by the existence, at this very day, of ruins that must at some remote period have belonged to their idolatrous worship. Throughout his career, these men were the most active, the most influential, and, consequently, the most formidable enemies with whom he had to contend. Rejecting, therefore, this fable, and convinced that Iona was not even possessed by Columba until he had converted the Pictish king (for why should a pagan be so liberal to strangers, and a stranger too of a different faith?), we may praise his policy in commencing, as he evidently did, his course of proselytism with Brude. The royal palace, says Adamnan, was in the vicinity of Loch Ness. Whether, as we are frequently told, the whole of Scotland north of the Grampians was under the sway of this monarch, or whether his dignity was purely military, and he was merely the hereditary chief of a clan, independent of this dignity, can never be decided. All that we can learn with certainty is from Bede, that this Brude (Bridias) was a most powerful sovereign (rege potentissimo), and that the missionary labours of Columba commenced in the ninth year of his reign. As the abbot approached his palace, he, probably at the instigation of his druids, of whom Broichan, his tutor, was chief, ordered his gates to remain closed. That they were miraculously opened, viz., by Columba making the sign of the cross and touching them with his hand, will be credited by few readers: the cause was the eloquence and perseverance of the saint; unless, indeed, some convert behind the entrenchments admitted the peaceful array. This visit led to the monarch's conversion, and that of his family; but Broichan still remained a pagan; the druids were still suffered to celebrate their rites; nor was the ancient superstition extinguished before the great body of the people were won over to the new faith. In this, as

in all other cases, when the majority were of the new faith, they would lose no time in compelling the rest to conform. Notwithstanding the miracles which are said to have accompanied the preaching of the Gospel, we have no reason to believe that its progress was other than very gradual. True it is, that great success crowned the zeal of the missionary; that thousands and tens of thousands believed and were baptized; but we read of pagans during the whole of his life, and in the time of his immediate successors. Yet they were evidently few; and in the revolution of a century all had probably disappeared from the Scottish continent. Indeed, as the great body of the southern Picts were already converted; as the Scots who came from Hibernia were of the new faith, we cannot suppose that, even had the monks of Iona been less diligent, idolatry could long have subsisted among the Picts of the north. — The manner in which Columba proceeded in his great work is entitled to our admiration, and is worthy of imitation by other missionaries. Having founded his monastery, with its invariable adjunct, a school, or college, his first care was to admit the sons of noble Picts. As the superiority of himself and his companions in all the learning of the age was obvious, the parents were not unwilling to allow their sons to be instructed, even though Christianity was taught at the same time with literature and science. In the second place, the abbot was an excellent physician: medicine, indeed, was an essential part of an ecclesiastic's knowledge at this period; and by his skill in what every missionary should understand, he often found opened the way for spiritual, no less than bodily, cures. Even Broichan, the arch druid and regal tutor, experienced the efficacy of his treatment; and, in return, he insisted that the pagan should give freedom to a female slave. If any patients were likely to remain for some time under his care, he brought them to his monastery, and tended them assiduously. By this wise expedient he became acquainted with the true character of the

disease; and if he could not cure the body, he endeavoured to save the soul. By the side of all, whether at the convent or in their own houses, he always prayed, and with such evident concern for their welfare, temporal and spiritual, as to call forth the love even of the most obstinate pagans. Again, another branch of knowledge in which he was profoundly versed, that of agriculture, was of incalculable service in the propagation of the faith. To a barbarous nation, which, alike from its ignorance of the art and from its internal feuds, must often have suffered from famine, this kind of knowledge must have been hailed with the utmost gratitude, — a feeling most auspicious to a Christian missionary. But, more than all the other causes that led to the conversion of the people, was the sanctity of his manner and the benevolent tenour of his life, no less than that of his companions. The barbarians might not at first be able to comprehend the nature of the truths which he taught them; but they could not dispute the purity of his conduct, or his unwearied zeal for their temporal welfare. This it was that made so deep an impression on their minds; that moved them to follow him in crowds, and at length to regard him as one gifted with supernatural virtue, and, we may add, with supernatural powers.*

The present character of Columba, as drawn by his 563
two biographers, is in every view admirable. 1. Omit- to
ting his austerities, which we might term puerile and 597.
absurd, were they not felt necessary by himself for the effectual suppression of some powerful temptation, the first striking feature is his dependence on heaven, not only in the most important, but in the most ordinary transactions of life. Being one day at the palace of king Brude, Broichan, the chief druid, asked him when he intended to sail (he had to cross Loch Ness on his return to the convent). "In three days," was the

* Hector Boetius, Scotorum Historia, lib. vi. fol. 110. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. iii. cap. 4. Moore, History of Ireland, vol. i. p. 244. Cuminius, Vita S. Columbæ, passim. Adamnanus, Vita ejusdem (in pluribus capitulis). Alfordus, Annales, A. D. 563, &c. Usserius, De Primordiis, p. 697.

reply, "if such be God's will, and I live till then." "That shall not be," pursued Broichan, "for I will raise a storm, with mist and darkness." (This is a very ancient, though not the most ancient, allusion to the magic pretensions of the druids; and we are surprised to see how faithfully the superstition has been transmitted from that period to the present.) But Columba was not to be deterred from his purpose. Though, as we are informed by Adamnan, the storm was indeed raised, he embarked, and the winds became instantly propitious.—If his friends were in danger, if his monks were threatened with any impending calamity, if he or they were about to embark, he betook himself to prayer, and commanded others to do the same, in the certain belief that the intercession would be heard. Thus, when a pestilence raged, he prayed that it might pass without harm, and the event corresponded with his faith. In the century following his death, Adamnan firmly ascribes the safety of the monastery amidst a contagion, which desolated all England, to his prayers. Thus also, when a woman was labouring in a severe child-birth, he betook himself to the same means — we are told with the same success; and the same result is said to have followed when he interceded with heaven for a friend at sea during a terrible storm. He ascribed the same efficacy to the prayer of other good men. When himself in danger of sinking while passing between Ireland and Iona, he declared that his preservation was owing not so much to his own intercession as to that of his friend St. Kenneth. The trust which he always reposed in the divine protection he sought to impress in the hearts of others; and his satisfaction was great when he succeeded. One day, when his favourite disciple Baithen was about to embark in one of the frail boats belonging to the monastery, he said: "A huge sea-monster has been discovered this night in the very route thou intendest to take: perhaps it may meet thee!" "And if it should," was the reply, "both it and I are in the hands of God!" "My son,

go in peace! thy faith will certainly save thee!" 2. The kindness of his manner, the unaffected offspring of the heart, was visible every moment of his life. If he met a child, he blessed it. If he entered the hut of a poor man, as in his frequent missionary visitations he often did, he generally cultivated the good-will of his host by talking of the poor man's circumstances: by asking, for instance, how many cows he had; and by expressing a wish that God would multiply the number. Whoever, rich or poor, Christian or pagan, approached him, was sure to be received with the sweetest affability, and to be dismissed with a benediction. This was more peculiarly the case in regard to his monks and his domestics. If any one offended him, he instantly forgave; if any one had offended God, he prayed for him. He addressed them by the endearing appellation of "Children," or "Brethren." When one of them, Dermid by name, was sick, and his death considered at hand, Columba was constantly at the bed side; and he prayed with fervour that he might not see the grave close on his beloved monk,—that the monk might survive *him*; and his prayer, we are told, was granted. When employed in the severe labour of agriculture — and all his monks were — he visited them at their task; and when he was too old to share in it, he encouraged them by his manner. The degree of that encouragement must have been wonderful, or they would never have said that, when *he* was with them, they were insensible of their toil. The same benevolence was extended to all the world. If the unfortunate were in pain, he visited, comforted, and if possible relieved them. If any were in slavery, he did his utmost to redeem them; and when he had no silver or gold, — which, indeed, he seldom had, — he found a substitute. If any were in poverty, he relieved them; if naked, he clothed them; if houseless, he provided a refuge for them. His hospitality was boundless. We read of one stranger who staid at the monastery some months; of two others who asked for a twelvemonth's permis-

sion to remain, and were readily satisfied. He himself does not consider it beneath his dignity to provide for the wants and comforts of the stranger: thus on one occasion he causes the bath to be prepared; on another, he breaks even the solemnity of a fast that the hungry traveller may eat. He esteemed the virtue, in the highest sense of the word, sacred; and its violation in one instance calls forth — what was most unusual to his gentle and meek temper — the most awful denunciation. He had recommended a noble Pict to the hospitality of a powerful Scot in Ilay: but the guest was slain by the treacherous host. "Not unto me," cried the troubled saint, "has this miserable wretch lied, but unto God; and his name will be blotted from the book of life. It is now midsummer: before autumn dawns he will receive his reward!" The prophecy, says Adamnan, was fulfilled. — But he readily forgave offences when he alone suffered. A poor thief was caught in the act, and brought before him. He reprobated the sin, but forgave the sinner, and even dismissed him with a present for his family. His greatest distress was to hear of any one dying in a state of impenitence: then groans burst from his heart, and his tears flowed plenteously. On the other hand, with what joy he witnessed the repenting sinner! On one occasion, he and Dermid being seated on the hill that overlooked the monastery, in expectation of a sail from Ireland, Dermid, whose eyes were clearer than those of the abbot, at length declared that one was in sight. It was wafting a penitent. "Let us hasten to meet him," said Columba, "for such is the love of Christ himself!" They walked to the shore, the penitent landed, the abbot caught him in his arms, and shed as many tears of joy as the other of sorrow: "I beseech thee to take comfort, my son! thy sins are forgiven; for it is written, *A broken and a contrite heart God will not despise!*"— Even the dumb creation partook of his benevolence. Adamnan acquaints us with an incident "which, though small, ought not, he thinks, to be over

looked," and the reader will probably think the same. A crane was one day winging its flight towards the island, but was evidently so spent that it could hardly be expected to reach the land. The abbot directed one of his monks to hasten to the shore, to take the poor bird to the nearest house, to tend it carefully for three days, and then allow it to depart. The monk did so, and the pleasure of Columba was great: "My dear brother! may God for this act of mercy send thee his blessing!"

3. But with all his meekness, the abbot could be firm and unbending when such a frame of mind was required. He would not cure Broichan, the arch-druid, until he was promised the release of the female slave. As we have just seen, he would not overlook the crime of the noble assassin in Ilay. Seeing one day that a man of noble family, but a regicide, and guilty of most crimes, had professed repentance, had sought the monastery of some kind abbot, had assumed the cowl, and even embraced holy orders, he uttered a dreadful excommunication on the easy bishop, which, his biographer asserts, was truly prophetic: "Perish the hood which Finchan has laid on that cursed head! may it die before its wearer! For the culprit will return to his iniquity as the dog unto its vomit; and will be killed, as he has been wont to kill, by the edge of the sword!"— More than once, indeed, had he need to try the sincerity of the candidates for the monastic profession. One day a man from Connaught appeared, and requested to be admitted into the order. After some conversation with him, Columba perceiving that, however good the intention, the penitent was actuated rather by impulse than conviction, was desirous to divert him from his purpose by placing before him the extreme rigour of the monastic life, the burdensome obligation of the rule, the labours and fatigues to which that profession was subject. All this, however, seemed to make little impression on the candidate, who still persisted. "Be it so!" replied the abbot; "but I will not administer the vows to you until you have

passed seven years in a monastery to which I shall send you!"—The severity of Columba towards one or two who were apparently contrite, has been noticed by his biographers; but it rested on his perfect knowledge of their characters and crimes. Hearing that Lugaid, a notorious offender, was approaching the island with the resolution of submitting to whatever penance the abbot might prescribe, he told one of his monks to hasten to the shore, and not allow the sinner to set one foot on the island, but take him to the isle of Mull. But Lugaid had been accustomed to follow his own will, and he swore that he would see and converse with Columba, or never eat more. Hearing this, the saint, accompanied by his disciple Baithen, walked to the shore. Baithen advised the abbot to receive the repentant sinner, and to enjoin a suitable penance, quoting many scriptural passages to the effect that none are ever repulsed by heaven. "Alas!" replied the latter, "little art thou acquainted with this man's crimes: like Cain he has slain his brother, and he has sinned with his mother!" No remorse could seem to be more sincere than that of Lugaid; he knelt on the sand, pathetically implored penance, and vowed to observe it. After some hesitation, the abbot said, "If thou wilt pass ten years in tears, prayers, and lamentation among the Britons, and never again set foot in Ireland, perhaps God may pardon thee!" The man promised, but the abbot knew his heart. Having returned to the monastery, he observed with a sigh: "This son of perdition will not fulfil his promise: he will soon return to Ireland, and be slain by his enemies!" He might say this without the aid of revelation; but as the event happened just as he had predicted, it was regarded as miraculous.—Another proof of Columba's firmness, when duty required it from him, is afforded by the fact that after he had vainly attempted to divert the sons of king Conal, his kinsmen, from the evil of their ways, he solemnly excommunicated them while in Ireland, and consequently while he lay exposed to

their vengeance. The thunders of the church were not likely to have much effect on such offenders; and he prayed to heaven that in mercy both to the world and to themselves, their lives might be shortened. One of these sons continued to follow the same piratical course of life, and thrice robbed the house of a good man with whom Columba was accustomed to lodge whenever he passed that way. On the third occasion he was met by the abbot as he was carrying away his booty in triumph. The latter earnestly besought him to abandon the plunder; followed him to the shore; and in his zeal for his soul, much more than for the poor man's substance, he waded into the sea after the retreating vessel. But he was ridiculed for his pains. In the bitterness of his heart he prayed that the censures of the church might be ratified in heaven, and seating himself on an eminence, thus addressed the few monks who were with him: "God will not always suffer his servants to be thus treated. See the dark cloud arising in the distant north! it bears the doom of this wretched pirate!" The cloud gathered, spread, advanced; the storm arose, and between Mull and Colonsay the boat, probably overladen with plunder, sank with its guilty crew. 4. Columba held avarice in remarkable detestation. Hearing of a clergyman who had just died, and who had been remarkable for parsimony, he said, "The man's heart was hard and avaricious, and his soul is now with demons!"—On the same subject an anecdote is related by O'Donnell, but from what authority derived we know not. Two persons applied to him for alms, the one penurious, the other wasteful; to the first he gave a little, to the second much. His conduct in this instance being disapproved by those who were with him, he desired them to ascertain the use which each would make of his bounty. It was found that while the miser sewed in his garment the money which he had received, in addition to ten pieces of gold he had before, the other distributed *his* to all who happened to be with him.—But the saint exhibited his detestation of

this vice more by his constant charity than by any other means.* And he had charity in his mind no less than in his actions. He talked with high gratification of a smith who, in the interior of Ireland, laboured assiduously that something might remain for the poor. "Happy man!" was his exclamation, on hearing of his death; "his soul is conducted by holy angels to the joys of Paradise!" What is more remarkable, he extended this liberal sentiment to persons of a different creed. As he was one day passing along the borders of Loch Ness, he was told of a virtuous pagan then at the point of death; and he did not hesitate to tell his companions that the angels were commissioned to carry the man's soul to heaven. We may, perhaps, doubt whether this happiness would have been awarded to him, notwithstanding the rectitude of his whole life, (naturale bonum per totam vitam ad extremam senectutem conservantem,) had not the abbot arrived in time to baptize him. In respect to the excellent qualities of his heart, we need no other proof than is furnished by one of his own prayers, that he might never refuse any man in a reasonable request, lest such a refusal should hurt his usefulness. 5. The activity of the abbot was almost unparalleled. He slept little; was never idle even for a moment; and what is much better, he was always employed in something good. If not engaged in public worship, or in the labours of agriculture, or in his missionary duties, or in his abbatial superintendence, or in profitable conversation — and not one idle or useless word is said ever to have escaped his lips — he was absorbed in meditation or in silent prayer. That such a man should be held in boundless reverence; that he should be honoured by king and peasant; that he should be thought to enjoy constant communion with God; that he should even be favoured, not merely by the prophetic gift, and by the power of working miracles,

* How came Dr. Johnson to declare that avarice is not naturally odious? He knew better; but as he was advancing in years the love of money blinded him.

but by angelic visitations, was the natural belief of the times. And the fame, wide as it was, which he enjoyed in his own day, was little in comparison with that which posterity has thrown over him.*

The last scenes of this abbot's life are worthy of 597.
minute notice. If his biographers are to be believed, he had, from his arrival in the island, foretold that his labours would be extended to thirty years; and that, as he was forty-two when he landed in Scotland, his years would be protracted to seventy-two; but he did not die at that period, because we are told his life was prolonged four years through the earnest prayers of the numerous churches and monasteries dependent on him. During the last of the four years he is said to have given several hints of his approaching departure. His last visit to his monastic labourers was in the month preceding his death. They were in the most remote part of the island, and as he was unable through infirmity to walk, he rode in a little car. This, he told them, was his last visit; and, seeing their intense grief, he consoled them as well as he could; he then turned towards the east, and solemnly blessed the island, its soil, produce, and inhabitants, adding, that so long as they feared God, his benediction would be effectual. At mass on the following Sunday, his face gleamed with unusual satisfaction, — doubtless with reference to his approaching departure. On the Sunday after that he walked out with his servant, Dermid, to the barn, where, perceiving two heaps of corn, the produce of the recent harvest, he thanked God that his servants would have a sufficiency of bread for the year, now that he was about to be taken from them. Dermid beginning to sob, replied, "This year hast thou often afflicted us by alluding to thy death!" The saint added, that he had something more to unfold if his servant would engage not to mention it until he was no more. The promise was made. "In holy scripture," pursued the abbot

* Authorities: Cuminius and Adamnanus, Vita S. Columbæ; in Pinkerton, Bollandus, and Mabillon, in a multitude of chapters.

"this day is called the *Sabbath*, which means *rest*; and to me it is indeed a Sabbath, for it is the limit of my toilsome labour in this world, and a final rest: at the midnight of this sacred day I go the way of my fathers!" This addition was not likely to raise the spirits of the faithful domestic, and it required all the abbot's power of consolation to pacify him. On their return to the monastery he sat down to rest his weary limbs. There a tender incident occurred. An old white horse, which had been accustomed to carry milk to the monastery, came up to him, and reclined its head on his bosom. There was nothing singular in the event: the animal loved him, and had often been patted by him. But on the present occasion it made a much deeper impression; and Dermid may be excused for asserting, what he doubtless fancied, that the horse, as if aware of its benefactor's departure, sympathised so far as to shed tears. He attempted to drive the intruder away. "Let him alone!" said the abbot, "for he loves me! God hath planted affection even in beasts!"—He then ascended the rising ground, looked down for the last time on his monastery, and blessed it. Having descended, he retired to his cell, and proceeded with a work on which he had been for some time engaged,—the transcription of the Psalter. When he had finished that verse of the thirty-third psalm, *They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing*, he laid down his pen, observing that the page was ended; and that the passage was a fit one for *him* to conclude: and that the following verse, *Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach ye the fear of the Lord*, he left for Baithen to transcribe, since the import agreed better to his successor than to him. As the vesper bell sounded, he went into the church to the evening prayers; and when they were concluded, he, feeling exhausted, laid down on his couch. Though the couch was nothing more than the hard stone, use had rendered it agreeable to him. The shades of evening had now fallen; and as it was the 9th of June, midnight would soon arrive. Unwilling

to take a hurried leave of his beloved monks, or even that they should know of his departure, he confided his last instructions to Dermid, who was by his side, and whom he charged to deliver them, *ipsissimis verbis*, to the household: "My last request, dear children, is, that you live in perfect charity and peace with one another. If you do this, as the saints have done before you, God, the comforter of the good, will surely bless you: and I, who am going to join Him, will intercede for you, not only that ye may have sufficient of this world's necessaries, but also the eternal reward reserved for them who obey his will!" He was then silent until the midnight bell sounded for vigils, when, hastily arising, he hastened to the church, and knelt at the altar before any of the brotherhood could arrive. Dermid was the first to follow; and if we are to place any reliance on the two biographers, he saw the church filled with a celestial light*, — a phenomenon witnessed also by the monks who followed him. But it vanished before they or even he could enter; so that, being left in darkness—for the lamp had not yet been brought—he cried out in a voice of lamentation, "Where art thou, father, where art thou?" In groping with hands, he felt the saint lying on the floor; he raised him a little, and sitting down, laid his head on his bosom. Just then the lamps were brought; the abbot was observed to be dying; and a loud wailing was raised by all. But the spirit had not yet departed; the saint opened his eyes, looked on all present with inexpressible benignity, and a countenance impressed with joy. No doubt, adds Adamnan, — who professes to have derived his information from eye-witnesses, — his happiness arose from the sight of the holy angels waiting to conduct him. With Dermid's assistance, he attempted to lift his right hand, to bless all present: though speech was wanting, he made the sign of benediction, and immediately

* According to Adamnan, (lib. iii. cap. 31.), the same appearance of celestial light was perceived by several beholders, especially by some fishermen occupied in their craft. The light arose from the monastic church, and was confirmed by heavenly music. The biographer professes to have heard the relation from the lips of an eye-witness.

breathed his last, his countenance retaining its tranquil smile, and making him look as one, not dead, but enjoying a pleasing sleep.*

560 Of the monasteries and churches founded by St. Columba, the number, as before observed, is uncertain. Though
591. we cannot suppose with Colgan that it was three hundred, since his religious foundations have beyond all doubt been augmented by many which owed their existence to St. Columbanus, it might probably reach one hundred. Of these a considerable proportion must have been raised in Ireland; but the list furnished by Colgan will not bear examination, since some of them, as might be easily proved, were founded at very different periods. We are in the same darkness as to the monasteries and churches of Scotland and the Isles. We may, however, infer that the number was considerable: there was probably a church in each of the neighbouring isles; and there must have been many on the continent. The zeal, indeed, with which the monks of Iona carried the gospel into parts which may even be termed remote, is worthy of all admiration. We frequently read of their long absence from the establishment, and of their abbot's anxiety respecting them. Thus we are told of several voyages by Cormac to discover some land in which he was resolved to plant the gospel, and that thrice at least he was unable to find it. That these voyages were of considerable length, may be collected from the fact, that being one day at the court of Brude, and seeing there the vassal king of the Orkneys, he besought the former to speak to the latter in favour of his missionaries, if, during a long voyage in which they were at that time absent, they should land in one of those islands. They did land; and found that the recommendation of Brude had not been in vain: but for it, they would have lost their lives among the barbarian inhabitants. In one of his courses Cormac sailed in

* Cuminius, Vita S. Columbæ, cap. 19, 20, 21, 22. Adamnanus, Vita ejusdem, lib. iii. cap. 28 to 31. (apud Pinkertonium, Vitæ SS. Scotiæ; apud Bollendistas, Acta SS. die Junii ix.; apud Canisium, Lectiones Antiquæ tome i. p. 707.) Alfredus, Annales, A.D. 597.

the same direction fourteen days and nights,—a favourable wind, blowing towards the north,—and was carried into seas previously unknown. It may indeed be inferred, that he was driven into a high northern latitude much against his will, and much farther than he intended to go. It is certain that he and his monks were seized with terror at sight of the whales,—said to have been numerous,—which threatened destruction to their frail vessel. Fortunately for them, the wind changed from south to north, and "after many days and nights" brought them to the coast of Scotland. The same zeal appears to have animated all the disciples of Columba. One, St. Mochan, being urged by his father to remain in his native country, replied, "Thou indeed art my father, but the church is my mother; wherever she sends me, I am ready to go; and I esteem that my country where I can reap the best harvest, and do most service to the religion of Christ." Whether, as Pinkerton supposes, the monks of Iona went avowedly in quest of the ancient Thule, may be doubted: but probably they reached the Shetlands; perhaps even Iceland; for when that island was discovered by the Norwegians, Irish monks had been there. But, reverting to the ecclesiastical establishments of Columba and his disciples, it is singular that all the abbots, friars, and even bishops were dependent on the abbot of Iona, though that abbot was merely a presbyter. The bishops, like the abbots, were educated at Iona, were consecrated by another bishop resident on the island, and despatched to their different cures with uninterrupted regularity. Each of the *monks* in this parent establishment was qualified to govern a monastery in any other place,—a fact which speaks much for the discipline introduced by the extraordinary founder. But though the abbot of Iona was the ecclesiastical superior of many bishops, he was not their *primate*, much less the primate of *all* the bishops of Ireland. This was a temporal superiority, and not an ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and it was doubtless confined to the churches which had been erected by the community of Iona, and which were

served by monks. This indeed is expressly affirmed by the Venerable Bede, who says that Iona held for a time the rule over nearly all the monasteries of the northern Scots, and all those of the Picts. He adds, that this island was always governed by an abbot who was a presbyter, to whom even bishops were subject; a custom, as he well observes, unusual. On this subject there has been great mistake. So far was Columba from pretending to the episcopal character, that, as we learn from a chapter of Adamnan, he one Sunday gave way at the altar to a bishop who had recently arrived, because the latter only could break the bread without the aid of a presbyter.*

The astonishing success of Columba and of his immediate disciples in the propagation of the gospel, was, as we have already observed, owing in no slight degree to his policy in educating the native youth at his establishment. Many of them, utterly renouncing the world, betook themselves to a religious life, and in the sequel became useful missionaries to their fellow countrymen. The school of Iona was open to the youths of all countries. We read, not only of Scottish and of Pictish pupils, but of British and of Anglo-Saxon. What were the branches of knowledge taught in this flourishing institution? This, at the present day, can be matter of inference only; but something interesting may be collected from incidental passages. If we had no other basis on which to rest our opinion than this,—that the course of education for ecclesiastics required many years, we should be justified in concluding that it was tolerably extensive. Thus we read that St. Munn, one of Columba's disciples, was eighteen years at his studies before he embraced holy orders; and, from the manner in which the statement is made, such a length of time was evidently not unusual. Thus also a candidate for holy orders, who had arrived from another monastery, was

* Colgani, Vitæ SS. tom. i. passim. Adamnanus, Vitæ S. Columbæ (in pluribus capitulis). Usserius de Primordiis, p. 701. 703, &c. Beda, Historia Ecclesiastica, lib. iii. cap. 3, 4. Pinkerton, Vitæ SS. Scoticæ (in Vita S. Columbæ). Alfordus, Annales, A.D. 597. Smith's Columba, Appendix, p. 152.

obliged by the saint to study seven years longer before he could be admitted to the sacred office. This course comprised literature and science. The first must have been extensive: all the pupils of necessity learned Latin; many, no doubt, were acquainted with Greek. Adamnan, in the work *De Locis Sanctis*, written in conjunction with bishop Arculf, was evidently versed in the latter tongue, and probably in Hebrew; for Bede, whose judgment on this subject may be safely followed, says of Adamnan that he was a wise and good man, and deeply versed in the knowledge of Scripture.* — On the works ascribed to Columba himself, there is so much uncertainty, that we know not what to think. We doubt whether he composed the rule which bears his name; and of the hymns we are afraid to call him the author. But he was certainly a man of great learning — a man who would have been regarded as such in any age. It is certain too, that if not himself, some of his monks must have attended to the languages which, in the view of diffusing the gospel among the Britons, Saxons, and Picts, were taught in the monastery. All were intimate with Scripture; all, apparently with ecclesiastical history. That they had some knowledge of Irish laws, at least, appears from the fact that king Aidan took one hundred with him to the great council of Drimkeit, to vindicate his title to the throne. After all, however, the claims of the rivals were referred to St. Columba; but he refused to pronounce, and recommended them to abide by the decision of St. Colman Eala, described as "well versed in sacred and profane literature, especially in the antiquities of Ireland." In the sciences and the arts of life, their proficiency was more perceptible. To medicine, particular attention appears to have been paid; for the missionary supplied the wants of the body no less than of the soul. Agriculture was cultivated with equal ardour; and as all, without exception, were required to join in it, so all must have made considerable progress in it. We read,

* "Vir bonus et sapiens, et scientiâ scripturarum nobilissime instructus."

not only of the ordinary produce, but of honey, apples, &c. One monk (Lafran) was called *Hortulanus*, evidently because his duty lay in the gardens of the establishment: St. Ciaran was the *carpenter*, St. Senach the *smith*, &c. The last, indeed, appears to have possessed the art of extricating the iron from the stone, or at least of fusing the metal; for a passage in O'Donnell informs us that he was one day *liquendis ferramentis occupatus*. Nor is this very incredible, when we read of *glass* drinking vessels, and of *vitrified* walls.—In architecture the brotherhood must of necessity have made some progress, or Columba and his twelve companions would not have been able to erect the monastery and church of Iona, and, as the community increased, so many others in different parts of the Scottish continent and islands. Modern pride is inclined to condemn the buildings of this period as mere hovels covered with turf; but whatever might be the abodes of the poor, those of the higher ranks were substantial if not commodious buildings. The ruins of a very ancient one in Kintyre have, at this day, walls eleven feet thick. "It is at least 1500 years since a royal palace in Argyleshire, called Benegonium by historians, and *Baileuriyh* (the king's town) by the natives, ceased to be the residence of kings; yet within these few years, a man who had been carting peats behind it, alighted upon the pipe by which the water had been conveyed under ground to the citadel." * —To their knowledge of navigation we have already alluded,—for considerable knowledge they must have had, or they would never have found their way during so many days through the trackless waste. Add, that they must have possessed some acquaintance with astronomy, or they would not have been able to defend, against their learned opponents, their own, that is, the Greek time of observing Easter.—Longer, on this subject, our limits will not permit us to dwell; but if we are not much deceived, we have said enough to show that the monks of Iona were a

* Smith's Life of St. Columba, p. 80.

learned body; that it was indeed a "luminary of the Caledonian regions,"—"the illustrious island" where "savage clans and roving barbarians were taught the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion;" that to it Scotland was indebted for every thing like civilisation, for every thing valuable in life.*

But Scotland was not the only country thus benefited 635.
by the apostolic monks of Iona: to them Northumbria was equally indebted. Christianity had, indeed, been previously introduced into this province by St. Paulinus, under the sanction of king Edwin (626), and had been followed by the conversion, not only of that monarch, but of the pagan high priest Cuifi; of many other priests; of the chief nobility; and of a considerable number among the people. But the eight years which had elapsed from the preaching of Paulinus to the death of Edwin (626—634) had not been sufficient to establish Christianity in that dark region. It had been extirpated by the ferocious Penda, the pagan king of Mercia, the conqueror of Edwin, whose sword was dyed with Christian blood from one extremity of the kingdom to the other. Even Paulinus, the bishop of York, had deserted his post, and fled to Kent, from a conviction that there was no longer any hope for the cause of true religion. Paganism had been restored by the two successors of Edwin; but on their death, Oswald, who surprised and defeated the enemy near Hexham, and was in consequence hailed as monarch of all Northumbria, was resolved to restore the faith of Christ. He did not apply for missionaries to the successors of St. Augustine at Canterbury, but to the monastery of Iona. In his youth he had been an exile among the Picts, and had been taught to reverence the inmates of that establishment. In accordance with his application, a chapter was assembled by Segenius, the third abbot from Columba, and Cormac, an ecclesiastic of severe habits, was consecrated bishop, and sent

* Authorities: Cuminius, Vita S. Columbæ. Adamnanus, Vita ejusdem. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica. Colganus, Thaumaturgia. Smith, Life of St. Columba. Moore, History of Ireland (CAB. CYC.), vol. i. Waraeus, de Scriptoribus Hibernicis, in places too numerous to be particularised.

to Northumbria. But he was unsuccessful; he made no converts; nobody, indeed, would listen to him; and in a few months he returned to Iona in disgust. When giving to the chapter an account of his ill-fated mission, of the insuperable difficulties with which he had to contend, and of the utter hopelessness of making a salutary impression on a people so ignorant and barbarous, "Brother," exclaimed a voice, "you seem to have been too severe with your untutored auditors, and to have lost sight of the apostolic injunction which commands us to feed little children with milk: by degrees you might possibly have nourished them with the stronger food of God's word, and raised their minds so as to comprehend and practise the more sublime precepts!" This was felt by all present to be true wisdom: every eye was instantly turned on the speaker, a private monk, named Aidan, who was immediately chosen, consecrated, and sent to king Oswald's court. He chose Lindisfarne as the seat of his spiritual government,—doubtless because in so retired a place he could best inculcate the monastic virtues, and attend to the education of youth. His success was great: converts were multiplied; churches arose wherever they were wanted; some few monasteries were built and endowed; and in a few years the faith was so deeply rooted as to bid defiance to future disasters. Yet when St. Aidan set foot in Northumbria, he was not *perfectly* master of the Saxon tongue*, that is, he could not speak it with fluency, and king Oswald was his interpreter. On these occasions he employed the Scottish (Erse) language, which the king had learned during exile. "It was a beautiful sight," says the venerable historian, "to see the monarch explaining the word of God to his generals and ministers." But St. Aidan, we may infer, was soon able to preach in the native language. "To journey," says Bede, "from town to town, from valley to valley, not on horseback, but (unless necessity commanded otherwise) on foot, was his constant manner of life. When, as he proceeded

* "Qui Anglorum linguam *perfecte* non noverat."—*Bede*."

along, he perceived a number of men, rich or poor, standing together, he instantly turned aside to them, — if idolaters, to instruct and baptize them ; if believers, to comfort them in the faith, to excite them to deeds of mercy, and to the Christian virtues." Other missionaries frequently arrived from Iona, to assist him in his great work ; and we have the express authority of the great English historian for asserting, that its progress was surprising. His activity, indeed, knew no bounds. Even in the fervid time of Bede, it excited his admiration no less than his envy : — "His life casts deep reproach on our indifference : all his attendants, lay and clerical, were constrained to read and meditate, either in the psalms or some other edifying book. This was his daily occupation, and that of all his companions, wherever they might be." Even when he visited the king, which was very seldom, he was accompanied by one or two clergymen ; and when they had partaken of some refreshment, they speedily returned to their reading or praying. He never spared a powerful offender. The money which he received from the rich he gave to the poor, or employed in the redemption of captives. And it is pleasing to find, from the express words of the venerable historian, that many of the captives thus redeemed were instructed and ordained priests. The same too was the case with many of his pupils, who in the sequel became monks and priests, and his best agents in the propagation of the gospel.* "Above all," says the admirable writer, "he commended his doctrine in this — he lived exactly as he preached : he sought nothing, he loved nothing, belonging to this world." The only thing which the historian could blame in St. Columba and his successor, was their adhesion to the erroneous computation respecting Easter. And even this defect was remedied in the time of Bede, that is, in 715, by Egbert, who prevailed on the monks of Iona to adopt the universal mode of computation. It was adopted many years before in

* "Imbuebantur præceptoribus Scottis parvuli Anglorum, una cum majoribus studiis et observatione disciplinæ regularis."

England, at a solemn conference between the hostile parties, held in the monastery of Whitby. That such a man as St. Aidan should attain a degree of success inferior only — if inferior — to that which had been attained by the celebrated founder of Iona, cannot surprise us. The see which he established subsists to this day. During sixteen consecutive bishops, viz. from St. Aidan to Eardulf, the cathedral remained in the Island of Lindisfarne; and when, in 895, the depredations of the Danes rendered a safer place necessary, Chester-le-Street became the seat of the bishop: and so it continued under nine consecutive prelates until the year 995, when bishop Aldhame transferred the cathedral to Durham.*

Like Lindisfarne, Iona was destined to become the frequent prey of the northern pirates. Their earliest depredations appear to have been committed in 797, and four years afterwards the monastery was burnt to the ground, most of the monks perishing in the flames. In 805, sixty-eight more of these holy men received the crown of martyrdom. During most of the ninth century, indeed, the piratical incursions of these savages were incessant. Often were the inmates compelled to flee; but after the storm had spent its fury, they were sure to visit the ruins of their beloved abode, and to restore it to splendour. After the year 875 these depredations were much less frequent: a century elapsed before the monastery was again consumed, and a portion of the monks martyred. This too appears to have been the last great disaster inflicted on this celebrated establishment: for though all the western isles were, in 1093, subjugated by Magnus, king of Norway, he was a Christian, and he spared the holy inmates. Here bishops, after resigning their dignity, retired, to be better

* Bede, Historica Ecclesiastica, lib. iii. cap. 3, 4, 5. 25. Vita S. Omaldi, (apud Bollandistas, Acta SS. Die Augustia, v.) Vita S. Aidani, (apud eosdem, Die Augustia, xxxi.) Matthæus Westmonasteriensis, Florilegus, necnon Simeon Dunelmensis, (subannis) Alfordus, Annales, tom. ii. (subannis), et tom. iii. 421. See the catalogue of the bishops in Wharton, Anglica Sacra, and Europe during the Middle Ages, (Cab. Cyc.), vol. iii. chap. 2.

prepared for death: here nobles, laying aside worldly ambition, professed as monks, and sought by penitence and prayer to make amends for their past lives: here kings laid aside their crown, their fleeting splendour, and learned humility with the other Christian virtues. The monastery was the ordinary sepulchre of the Scottish and Irish kings; whose rulers were joined by many of their Norwegian brethren.*

* Johnston, Chronicle of Men and the Isles. — Chronicle of Events connected with the Monastery of Iona. (Appendix to Smith's Life of St. Columba).

ALFRED THE GREAT.

ENGLISH CIVILISATION IN THE NINTH CENTURY.

The materials for the life of this great monarch, are neither so ancient nor so abundant as we might have expected. No contemporary, except Asser of St. David's, has left us a detailed account of him; and even his must be perused with caution, since it is written by a warm encomiast, by the personal friend of the subject, by one indebted to the king for splendid ecclesiastical dignities. The notices concerning him in the Saxon Chronicle may, or may not, have been recorded by a writer of the same period*; but though valuable as exhibiting the progress of the Danish and Saxon arms, they are of little service to the literary biographer. Those of succeeding historians are more ample; but they were either borrowed from tradition, or from written sources which, as they are no longer extant, and cannot be subjected to the tests of criticism, are of little weight. The incidental mention of the king in the life of Neot and other saints, though well deserving of attention, is liable to the same objection as that which we may urge against William of Malmesbury, lf, Florence of Worcester, and other writers of the century. But it is the duty of criticism to reject whatever is not sufficiently impressed by the

* We do not feel disposed to controvert the gratuitous notion of Ingram (Saxon Chronicle, preface, p. xii.) and others, that Alfred wrote a portion of the Chronicle. There is no historical evidence whatever in favour of the assumption. The case may be fairly stated thus:—Alfred did write much which has descended to us; he probably wrote much which is lost; ergo he wrote a portion of the Saxon Chronicle. This may be logic at Oxford, but it will not prevail in other places.

stamp of probable truth, and to compile, from genuine, and if possible authentic, remains, whatever may throw light on the character of the subject. Fortunately many relics of Alfred's genius—his literary and legislative acts—are still accessible; and from them, no less than from the notions to be collected from eminent historians and biographers, we hope to derive something that may illustrate alike the man and his age. As our design is the moral and intellectual portrait of both, we shall not dwell on his interminable contests with the Danes — contests that have occupied a thousand pens, and have been familiar to us from early childhood.

The birth of Alfred took place at Wantage, in Berkshire, in the year 849. He was the youngest and most beloved of king Ethelwolf's sons. Doubtless he was the most beloved *because* the youngest; for though his disposition was sweeter, and his person more comely, than those of his elder brothers, parental affection is not a matter of choice, but an involuntary impulse.* Of this feeling Ethelwolf, who had been an ecclesiastic in his youth, and who was consequently much attached to the chair of St. Peter, gave a signal proof in the year 853, when he sent the young prince to Rome. On this occasion Alfred was certainly anointed king by the reigning pope, and most probably at the express entreaty of his father. In modern times it has been contended that this unction was merely one of Christian confirmation. But this statement is in direct opposition, first to the testimony of Asser and the Saxon Chronicle, that it was the *regal* unction that was conferred †; and, secondly, to the fact that, in the Saxon as indeed in the universal church, confirmation was administered *immediately* after baptism; and baptism was not delayed beyond thirty days after the birth of

849 to 860.

* "Cum communi et ingenti patris sui et matris amore supra omnes fratres suos." Asser, p. 15.

† "Infantem Aelfredum — *unxit in regem.*" Asser, p. 7. (Edit. Wyse.) "And this same year, Ethelwolf king sent Alfred his son to Rome, and Leo the pope consecrated him king" (*cyninge gehalgode*). Chron. Sax. A.D. 853.

the infant.* But if Alfred was thus anointed, we are not to suppose that the pope was favoured with any special revelation as to his future greatness. Assuming that the rite was conferred at the express desire of Ethelwolf, and we have a key to the whole mystery. Nor is this conduct of the father difficult to be explained, independently of his partiality for the child. In those days all the sons of the monarch were generally destined to sovereignty: hence the frequent partitions of territory by royal bequest, — the eldest son, however, inheriting the most extensive portion, and a superiority over the rest equal to that assumed in more feudal times by the lord over the smaller vassal. And we may here observe that feudality, though comparatively in its infancy, was inherent in the Saxon constitution. We do not indeed find the name, but certainly the *substance*, of feudal obligations,—of lord and vassal, of homage and service, of suit, purveyance, relief, wardship, scutage, &c. Hence we must not condemn too severely the custom prevalent among the Anglo-Saxon monarchs, of partitioning the dominions among their surviving sons. It was quite in accordance with this custom, and with the spirit of the age, that Ethelwolf intended his youngest son to be a king. By later writers we are informed that the views of the father were more extensive than we have assumed,—that Alfred was to inherit *his* dignity in all its plenitude, to the exclusion of the elder sons; who consequently detested their favoured brother.† Nor is there wanting some appearance of plausibility for the statement. Ethelwolf might certainly aspire to the elevation of his beloved son, in a country where the succession was not regulated by modern usage. The eldest son of a king was not necessarily the heir of his power: a younger son, or even a brother, was frequently substituted by his will, and by the suffrages of the bishops, thanes,

* By a law of St. Ina (see Wilkins's Concilia, tome i.) a parent, who neglected to have his child baptized within thirty days after the birth, was fined 30*s*., — a large sum in the eighth century; and he was also subject to a severe canonical penance.

† Expressly affirmed by Matthew of Westminster, p. 308.

and other dignitaries in the Wittena-gemot. In short, the history of our polyarchy affords abundant evidence that though *some* member of the reigning family was chosen, the strict laws of succession were little regarded. And the hypothesis before us derives some weight from the fact that when the king himself, two years afterwards, went to Rome, and took Alfred with him, his eldest son, Ethelbald, aided by the bishop of Sherburne, the earl of Somerset, and other powerful nobles, rebelled, and took measures to prevent, on his return, his resumption of the royal dignity. The ostensible motive for this rebellion was that Ethelwolf, while passing through France, had raised Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, to the dignity of anointed queen,—a dignity which from the time of Eadburga, the daughter of Offa, had been prohibited among the West Saxons.* The real motive, as Matthew of Westminster asserts, might be—in part at least—the partiality of the monarch for Alfred. As, however, no contemporary writer asserts that such was the design of Ethelwolf, it is safer to conclude that it extended no further than to place his favourite son over one of the Saxon provinces, with the regal title. However this be, on the return of the king a civil war would have devastated the country, had not the powerful on both sides interfered, and agreed that he should have the eastern parts of the monarchy only, while the rebellious Ethelbald should have the western and more extensive provinces. The fact that Ethelbald could raise a party so formidable as to compel his father to rest satisfied with a partition of the regal power, does not argue much for the popularity of the latter sovereign. He seems indeed to have neglected his royal duties, and while on a troubled throne to have remembered with regret the tranquillity of the cloister.—If his religious habits did not much benefit his people, they benefitted himself: in two years after these events this virtuous man, but weak king, left this world for a

* See the relation of her evil deeds in all our historians.

better. The widowed Judith showed as little principle as she did respect to his memory,—in a few months after his death she accepted the hand of his son the rebellious Ethelbald. But incestuous connexions were not, as the biographer assures us, "contrary to the custom of all pagan nations." Well may we be surprised how such an observation could have escaped Asser, knowing, as he ought to have done, that they were of frequent occurrence in the history of the Anglo-Saxons. Prior to the reign of Edward the Elder, the laws of the state and the censures of the church, are filled with denunciations against them; and from the increased severity of the penalties, we may infer that the crime was become more frequent and inveterate. But Ethelbald was brought to repentance by the exhortations of St. Swithin, bishop of Winchester: he separated from Judith; and the remainder of his short life was passed in a manner more becoming his station. He died in 860,—about two years and a half after his father Ethelwolf. If history be, as undoubtedly it is, a record of the divine justice here below, the death of Ethelbald, in the prime of life, and in the glory of empire, affords a lesson for mankind.*

861 to 872. As Alfred must have lost his mother Osberga before Ethelbald's marriage with Judith, that is, before the expiration of his seventh year; as his father died in his tenth; and as his brothers, who successively held the sceptre (Ethelbald, 858—860; Ethelbert, 860—866; Ethelred I., 866—871) regarded him with little favour, we need not be surprised that his education was neglected. By his friend Asser we are assured that he was not taught to read until he had passed his twelfth year. But we have some reason to dispute the statement. According to this biographer, his emulation was roused by a splendid volume of Saxon poetry which his mother, in presence of him and of his brothers, one day

* Asserius Menevensis, De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi, p. 3—14. (Edit. Wise). Saxon Chronicle (sub annis). Ingulfus Croylandensis, Historia, p. 17. Matthæus Westmonasteriensis, ubi supra. Wilkins, Leges Anglo-Saxonicæ, viz. Leges Æthelbirhti, Leges Hlotharii et Eadrici, vol. i. p. 1—7., and 7—9. Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis de Regibus, lib. ii. cap. 2.

promised to bestow on the boy who should the soonest be able to read it. Alfred obtained the prize. Who was this mother? Osberga it could not be, as she had long paid the debt of nature; Judith, the step-mother, a stranger to the language and literature of the country, could scarcely be so conversant with Saxon poetry as she must have been, to read the book to the children, and thereby to rouse the emulation of Alfred. Besides, we may reasonably doubt whether Judith was still in England when Alfred was twelve years old, viz. in 861. Her second husband, Ethelbald, died the preceding year, and her residence here was not likely to continue after that event: but we know that in 861, the year in which Alfred is said to have been thus incited to letters, she was married to a third husband, Baldwin with the Iron Arm, count of Flanders.* From these circumstances it is evident, either that this celebrated anecdote is a fable, or that Asser was mistaken in the date he assigns to the first literary education of Alfred. The latter conclusion is the more probable; for such anecdotes have generally some foundation on which to rest: it was not Judith, but Osberga, who stimulated him to this invaluable acquirement; and, instead of twelve, he was probably not seven years of age, when this impulse was given to his future character.† But he had, from his earliest infancy, been delighted with the recitation of Saxon poems and songs, some of which he had retained

* This third marriage is not mentioned by Asser, or by the Saxon Chronicler, but it is in the Annales Bertianani (Bouquet, Recueil, tome vii. p. 77.), and in Miræus, Opera Diplomatica, i. 152.) Hincmar, at the desire of the pope, reconciled Baldwin with the French king, who was at first indignant at the match.

† The whole relation shows that Alfred and his brothers were all children together when the mother displayed the book, and offered it as a reward to successful diligence:—

"Cum ergo quodam die mater sua sibi et fratribus suis quendam Saxonicum poematicæ artis librum, quem in manu habebat, ostenderet, ait: 'Quisque vestrum discere citius istum codicem possit, dabo illi illum.' Qua voce, immo divinâ inspiratione instinctus, et pulchritudine principalis litteræ illius libri illectus, ita matri respondens, et fratres suos ætate quamvis non gratiâ seniores anticipans, inquit: 'Verene dabis istum librum uni ex nobis, scilicet illi qui citissime intelligere et recitare eum ante te possit?' Ad hæc illa arridens et gaudens atque affirmans: 'Dabo,' inquit, 'illi:' tunc ille statim tollens librum de manu sua magistrum adiit et legit; quo lecto matri retulit et recitavit."—*Asser*, p. 16.

in his memory; and this attachment, doubtless, invigorated his first attempts to read. When he had acquired this "book knowledge" of Saxon, his ideas were expanded; he found that he had scarcely passed the threshold of learning, and he longed to enter the vast storehouse of Latin literature. But he had no instructors,—a misfortune which he bemoaned through life. Though, as we shall soon perceive, he ultimately acquired some knowledge of this language, he had passed three fourths of his eventful carecr before that acquirement was his, and had consequently lost the opportunity of employing it so liberally as he would have done had it been twenty years earlier at his disposal. But we are tempted to dispute the assertion of Asser, that at this period "good readers (of Latin) were not to be found in the whole kingdom of the West Saxons."* If by good readers he meant men who had a critical knowledge of the language, — who could write and speak as well as translate it, — he was probably right; but if, as we think, he confined the term to such as could read and translate it with comparative ease, he was surely mistaken. Swithin of Winchester, who died in 861, certainly understood it; and it is impossible to believe that he was the only scholar of his age. Probably by *illo tempore* the biographer does not allude to the early youth of Alfred, but to his manhood,—when he succeeded to the crown. We have the authority of Alfred himself for the statement, that when he "took the kingdom," he did not recollect one single ecclesiastic south of the Thames capable of translating the language of the ecclesiastics. But the state of knowledge in the infancy of the king, and that which existed in his manhood, were very different. From 860 to 872, when he succeeded the last of his brothers, the devastations of the Danes were sufficient to banish all literature from the island. Every shire of the kingdom was visited, plundered, and laid waste by these merciless invaders: their rage was

* "Illo tempore lectores bon in toto regno Occidentalium Saxonum non erant."—P. 17.

particularly directed against the churches and the monasteries, the only places where knowledge was to be acquired; and against the ecclesiastics, the only persons capable of imparting, whom on all occasions they mercilessly butchered. The church and convent of Lindisfarne were reduced to a mass of ashes; Coldingham shared the same fate; Tynemouth was levelled with the ground; Bardney presented nothing but smoking ruins; the stately Croyland, the magnificent Medeshamstead, the opulent Ely, were visited with equal fury; and in every case the ecclesiastics were put to the sword. The description which Ingulf has left us of the scenes accompanying the destruction of Croyland, may serve as a specimen of all the rest. It was midnight when the conflagrations in the direction of the Danish army were the harbingers of their approach. The abbot Theodore and his monks had just risen from their pallets to join in the vigil service. His first care was to dismiss the young monks, with a portion of the most valuable effects, to a place of security; while he, with the more aged and some young children, resolved to await the result, though that result, as he well knew, would be death. Repairing to the church of the monastery, mass was celebrated, and all communicated. At this moment the pagans arrived. The silence which reigned throughout the cloisters might have induced them to believe that all the inhabitants had fled, had not the distant chanting in the choir fallen on their ears. They hastened to the place, burst open the doors, and rushed to the altar: with his left hand one chief seized the abbot's venerable hair, while with the right he severed the head from the body. The example was followed by the rest; neither the hoary look of age, nor the cries of infancy, availed; all were massacred, one only excepted, a boy of ten years old, over whom earl Sidroc the younger (the name, were it only for this one act, ought to be preserved from oblivion) threw a Danish cloak, and whom he exhorted to continue by his side. When all the plunder which could be discovered was secured, the pile was set on fire,

and the conflagration lasted four days, — a proof of its extent. But the destruction at Medeshamstead was more awful; the abbot and eighty-three monks fell by the hand of Ubba; while the domestics, and the strangers who had taken refuge there, were despatched by his companions. The conflagration continued a whole fortnight, — the noble buildings, the costly ornaments and utensils, the valuable MSS. (and this monastery had the most extensive library in the kingdom), being reduced to cinders. After these melancholy facts, can we be surprised that in the earlier part of Alfred's reign neither books nor learned men were to be found? In his childhood, the state of things in this respect was, as we have before observed, very different. *Then* he might have found MSS. and preceptors enough; and if he did not apply himself to the study of Latin, the fault lay, not in the want of means, but in his own indolence, or rather, perhaps, in his inordinate attachment to the sports of the field. According to his biographer, he was the most expert hunter in his kingdom*; and, on one occasion, we read that his ardour in pursuit led him as far as Cornwall. In this statement thus incidentally made, we have the true secret of Alfred's ignorance during the half of his life. When years, and with them reflection, came upon him, well might he lament the unprofitable scenes of youth. Nor was his sorrow the less when he found that, however ardent his thirst of knowledge, obstacles almost insuperable lay between him and his object. He had perpetually to combat the Danes; he had to rule a fierce, a turbulent, a barbarous people; and, above all, he was a constant prey to disease, — from infancy to the very close of life. After a close consideration of these facts, we must be, not merely surprised, but astonished, at the progress he made in general literature.†

* "In omni venâtoriâ arte industrius venator incessabiliter laborat non in vanum: nam incomparabilis omnibus peritiâ et felicitate in illa arte fuit."—*Asser*, p. 16.

† Asserius Menevensis, de Rebus Gestis Aelfredi, ubi supra. Ingulfus Croylandensis, Historia, p. 21 and 22. (apud Gale, Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores, tom. i.) Historia Elyensis, p. 602. See Europe during the Middle Ages, CAB. CYC.), iii. 244, &c.

For the sake of clearness, we propose to investigate the character of this prince under two separate forms,—

First, as a sovereign and a man;

Secondly, as a man of letters, and a patron of letters. 871 to 878.

1. That Alfred succeeded to the throne under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, is evident from the description we have just given of the devastation committed by the Danes; who, on the death of Ethelred, were in possession of one half the kingdom, and whose ranks were recruited by perpetual immigrations from the north of Europe. His accession furnishes us with another illustration of the fact, that hereditary right was not understood by the Saxons. He had nephews, the sons of an elder brother, whose claims, in strict justice, were superior to his own; but they were not so much as mentioned, and he was hastily proclaimed. This, indeed, was not a time for delay, or for confiding the sceptre to the hands of a child. Yet Alfred had little inclination for the perilous dignity. His biographer expressly says that he accepted it unwillingly (quasi invitus), from a conviction that, if he were not sustained by the divine aid, he could not possibly withstand the vast army of pagans. As before observed, we shall not enter into the detail of his wars; but we must allude to their results, no less than to the general course of his defensive policy. In that policy we find much to condemn, and more to approve; but the condemnation applies to the earlier portion of his reign, the approbation to the later. Though his valour was so great as to border on rashness, he could not effect impossibilities; and, as his followers were thinned by the sword of the enemy, he betook himself to negotiation. He offered the Danish chiefs, in succession, large sums of money, on the condition that they would leave the kingdom, and transfer their depredations to other coasts. As might have been foreseen, they took the money, and instead of leaving the kingdom, immediately passed to the next province. Had this imprudence been committed once only, he might have been pardoned; but it was three

times repeated with the same result. The truth is, that from some cause not very clearly explained, he was for some time in no disposition to fight. During full six years he appears to have had no other policy than that of temporising; to have adopted his measures with precipitation, and without judgment. After this period he had the mortification to see three fourths of his kingdom in the hands of the enemy, and the remaining fourth of very dubious possession. It is certain that many of the Saxon inhabitants, despairing of the restoration of tranquility, expatriated themselves; while the greater number submitted to the domination of the invaders. The latter seem to encounter no opposition; Alfred flies before them, eager to find a place of concealment wherever he can; no fortress is now defended; no army is now with the king. Some modern historians, indeed, have made him sustain seven desperate battles in one year, viz. in 876; and have added, that in consequence of his severe losses on these occasions, he was not, during the following two years, able to bring any considerable force into the field. The fact, however, is, that the seven battles in question were fought at very different periods, in the last year of Ethelred's reign, and in the first year of Alfred's. Not one battle appears to have been fought in 876; and but one, which was rather a smart skirmish than an engagement, and in which Alfred himself had no share, in 877. He, as we have before observed, was no longer to be found: surrounded by a few nobles, and a few brave followers whom his misfortunes could not detach from him, he wandered from one asylum to another, until even this attendance being too great for security, he dismissed it, and was soon lost to the world.*

878. The courtly Asser asserts that the Danes were irresistible from their numbers; that if 30,000 men were killed in one day, twice 30,000 were in arms on the next.† This is a specimen of the gross exaggeration

* Authorities: Asser of St. David's, and the Saxon Chronicle.

† "Crescebat insuper diebus singulis perversorum numerus, adeo quidem, ut si triginta ex eis millia una die necarentur, alii succedebant numero duplicato," p. 29.

so frequent in this biographer, who carefully suppresses every circumstance that could in the least impeach the conduct of his royal benefactor. Where could the vessels have been found, necessary for the conveyance of so many combatants? nay, of their wives and children, by whom, as we often read, they were accompanied? Can any rational mind believe that there was one half, nay, one quarter, the number either of ships or of men on these shores, when we know that the flower of the northern population was, at this very time, in France, warring with that powerful monarchy? Again, it is certain that the native Saxons were not so broken in spirit as modern writers would have us to believe. If so, how could they, as we shall soon perceive they did, rally so effectually in a few short months as to be every where victorious over their enemies? The more deeply we examine into this most obscure period of our history, the more we shall be convinced that the causes assigned for Alfred's precipitate flight are insufficient, and that the true reasons were carefully suppressed by his contemporaries. The mystery we believe to have consisted in his own misconduct, during the first six or seven years of his reign. As this subject is at once curious and important, we will investigate it with some minuteness.*

That the misconduct of the king must have been notorious, is evident from even the reluctant admission of Asser, that he *deserved* the adversity which, at this period, fell to his lot.† Nor does the biographer confine himself to this general imputation, but proceeds to unfold a portion, though a small portion, of the ground on which it rested: — "Because, in the early part of his reign, while he was a young man, and governed by youthful thoughts, when subjects approached him to explain their necessities, or to complain of oppression, and to implore his aid and patronage, he would

* Father Alford was the first to point out the defects of Alfred. He was followed by nobody until Mr. Turner confirmed and amplified the proofs. We have been enabled to augment the illustrations collected by both.

† "Quam siquidem adversitatem præfecto regi illatam, non immerito ei evenisse credimus." This is more than we expected from you, sir Abbot.

not so much as listen to them; he gave them no manner of succour, and held them of no estimation." In the very next sentence we read that his kinsman, St. Neot, who was living when the biographer wrote *, was deeply grieved at this conduct, and predicted that if he did not amend, he would assuredly be punished for it; but that all admonition was lost on him. Asser adds, like a true Catholic, that as every sin *must* be punished by the divine justice, if not in this world, certainly in the next, God preferred *the present* visitation of his transgression, that he might be spared in the day of judgment.†

More than this we must not expect from one so much indebted to the munificence of the sovereign as this biographer, who wrote, too, when that sovereign was in the plenitude of power. Fortunately for the present inquiry, we have several accounts, both MS. and printed, of St. Neot's life; and one of them is probably the "Vita S. Neoti," to which Asser expressly alludes. Of the former, an ancient life in Saxon ‡ acquaints us with the prophetic menaces of his holy kinsman: — "Alas! oh king, much shalt thou suffer even in this life! the distress which awaits thee no tongue may wholly utter! Now, dear son, listen to me and incline thine heart to my counsel: depart entirely from thine unrighteousness; redeem thy sins with alms-giving; blot them out with thy tears." But this subject is more explicitly related in another life of Neot, which Mabillon has inserted in the Acts of the Benedictine Saints, which he assigns to an anonymous writer of the twelfth century, but which was probably compiled from more ancient sources by William, abbot of Croyland, in 1180.§ It informs us that Alfred frequently visited

* Adhuc vivens in carne.

† Asserius Menevensis, De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi, p. 31 and 32.

‡ Cottonian MSS. Vesp. D. 14.

§ To this opinion we are led by the extract made by Mr. Turner from another MS. in the Cotton Library, Claudius, A. 5., which is exactly the same as the corresponding one in the Collection of Mabillon. That learned monk was therefore wrong in supposing that the life in question was written by a monk of St. Neot's, in Huntingdonshire. There are some chronological blunders in the printed life; for instance, Neot is made a monk of Glastonbury, under St. Dunstan, who was not born until half a century after his death. Perhaps, however, there was another Dunstan prior to the celebrated one.

the saint, by whom he was more than once reprimanded, with very little effect. The freedom of the hermit (Neot had exchanged the cœnobitical for the anchoritical life), was the greater, says this biographer, as they were joined by blood (in fact, they were brothers,—the saint, no less than Alfred, being the son of Ethelwulf, king of Kent). But though the king profited something by the admonitions of this holy man, yet he was not brought to them to a due course of life; he did not fully desert the path of iniquity. "Wherefore one day, when he came, as he was wont, to see Neot, the latter upbraided him for his wickedness, and for the harsh severity of his government. He drew a contrast between David, the mildest of kings, and a pattern of humility to all men, and Saul, accursed for his pride." The predictions of Neot are also less obscurely worded than in the Saxon life:—"Why gloriest thou in thy wickedness? why thus powerful in vice? Thou hast been exalted, but thou shalt soon fall; like ears of corn shalt thou be bruised. Where then is thy boast? Of that very power, in the possession of which thou art now so exceedingly proud, thou wilt immediately be deprived. From the barbarians about to rush into thy kingdom, and, by the divine permission, about to triumph, thou wilt indeed escape, but thou wilt escape only to be a vagabond upon the earth; poor, and wanting all things, thou wilt hide thyself for a season; fearing lest any one who finds thee will slay thee!" There are two other lives of this saint,—the one in prose, the other in verse,— both ascribed to a monk of Ramsey in the twelfth century, and both printed by Dr. Whitaker, in his elaborate but fanciful account of St. Neot. Both confirm the whispered hints of Asser, and the loud denunciations of the earlier biographers of the royal hermit. The faults of Alfred are noticed by succeeding writers, by Matthew of Westminster, Wallingford, John of Tinemouth, and Capgrave. Nor were his merely the faults of the *sovereign:* he had many as a *man.* Even Asser allows that in his youth he experienced tendencies

so likely to lead him into guilt that he prayed Heaven to send him some affliction, that by the divine discipline he might not be rendered contemptible to the people.*

All this evidence, we submit, is entitled to some attention. The expressions of the biographers are sometimes remarkably strong: — intolerable tyranny," "cruel vices," "depraved manners," "ungovernable passions," "overbearing pride," "arrogant conduct," "dissolute habits," "debauchery,"— and they must surely have had a foundation. All this monarch's biographers were ecclesiastics, and ecclesiastics have never been much disposed to exaggerate the vices of kings. At the risk of provoking the shade of Dr. Whitaker, who will not allow Alfred to have been stained by a single vice, we maintain that he had many, and many too of a grievous character. Still less can we agree with the bombastic eulogium of Hume, who ascribes to him a wisdom which no philosopher, a virtue which no apostle, ever possessed. Whether his merit "may with advantage be set in opposition to that of any monarch or citizen which the annals of any age or any nation can present to us;" whether he be "the complete model of the perfect character which, under the denomination of a sage, or wise man, philosophers have been fond of delineating, rather as a fiction of the imagination than in hopes of ever seeing it reduced to practice;" whether all his virtues were "so happily tempered together," and "so justly blended, that each prevented the other from exceeding its proper bounds," must be left to the reader's judgment. He, probably, in sight of this evidence, will agree with us,— and, what is of far more importance, with the general tenor of our historians,— that the vices of the king must have powerfully contributed to the alienation of his people, and to his consequent retreat from the world.†

* Asser of St. David's. The two Saxon lives. Mabillon, Acta SS. Ord. S. Benedicti, Sæc. iv. pars 2. p. 69, &c

† Hume's England, vol. i.—Reign of Alfred. This is the most disgraceful national history in any language. It is full of blunders and of wilful misrepresentations. The life of Alfred is more like romance than truth.

Such is the dark side of this monarch's portrait: let us now contemplate the brighter and more pleasing.

That the character of Alfred was changed by affliction, is evident from the comparison of his conduct *after* his retreat to Ethelingey with what it had been *before.* No longer do we read of carelessness, hesitation, pride, haughtiness, dissipation, aversion to activity, mental or bodily. On the contrary, he suddenly assumes a new vigour, and resolves to struggle with fortune, even when that fortune appears the most hopeless. He had, indeed, taken a severe lesson in humility, when obliged, for the sake of his personal safety, to pass as the servant of his own herdsman.* The herdsman, indeed, notwithstanding the relation of Matthew of Westminster, appears to have known him, and must, in consequence, have yielded him respect; but the wife, who was probably as little to be trusted with the secret as the generality of her sex, was certainly ignorant of his quality. On this subject we have a well-known anecdote, which, as it is related by Asser, and is contained in the two lives of St. Neot, may be received with confidence. "It happened one day that the rustic wife of the cowherd was occupied in making bread, and that the king was seated near the hearth, preparing his bows, arrows, and other warlike weapons. When the luckless woman perceived the cakes burning, she ran towards them, removed them, and scolded the invincible king †; saying, 'Man! why dost thou neglect to turn the cakes, seeing how ready thou art to eat them when baked?' Little did this luckless woman know that it was king Alfred, who had fought so many battles against the Pagans, and obtained so many victories over them!" ‡ Such an in- 878.

* "Quendam suum vaccarium," says Asser. No humiliation would certainly have been greater had the herdsman been ignorant of his power and quality, and therefore unprepared to yield him respect.

† This epithet is very characteristic of Asser, who is a very insincere writer.

‡ "Contigit autem die quodam ut rustica, uxor videlicet illius vaccarii, pararet ad coquendum panes; et ilie rex sedens sic circa focum præparuit sibi arcum, et sagittas, et alia bellorum instrumenta. Cum vero panes ardentes aspexit illa infelix mulier, festinanter currit et amovit eos, increpans regem immitissimum, et dicens; Heus homo:

cident must have sunk deep into the royal mind. This woman, whom he would not, in other circumstances, have condescended to honour with a glance, was, in reality, more independent than he; for his very subsistence he was compelled to rely on her and her husband. The lesson was a bitter yet a salutary one. Personal feeling, no less than kingly duty and a laudable ambition, stimulated him to escape from this state of humiliation: through his trusty host, whom he afterwards persuaded to study, and enter the church, and whom he raised to the see of Winchester (the shrew of a wife must soon have died, or been immured in a convent), he acquainted a few of his most confidential followers with his place of refuge, and was soon joined by them. The island in which the hut was placed — if a piece of ground about two acres in extent, and surrounded by water and morasses, can be called an island — was excellently adapted for defence: fortifications were immediately raised upon it. The only accessible way to it was one bridge, and this too was fortified by a couple of towers. From this retreat the king and his companions frequently issued to harass the marauding parties of the Danes: if victorious, they

'Urere quos cernis panes, gyrare moraris,
Cum nimium gaudes hos manducare calentes?"

"Mulier illa infausta minime putabat illum esse regem Aelfredum, qui tot bella gessit contra paganos, tantasque victorias accepit de eis."—*Asser*, p. 30.

The account in the Latin narration of St. Neot is minute, and may, for any thing we know, be an extract from Vita Neoti mentioned by Asser:

"Alfred, a fugitive and exiled from his people, came by chance and entered the house of a poor herdsman, and there remained some days, poor and unknown.

"It happened that, on the sabbath-day, the herdsman, as usual, led his cattle to their accustomed pastures, and the king remained alone in the cottage with the man's wife. She, as necessity required, placed a few loaves, which some call loudas, on a pan with fire underneath, to be baked for her husband's repast and her own on his return.

"While she was necessarily busied, like peasants, on other affairs, she went anxiously to the fire and found the bread burning on the other side. She immediately assailed the king with reproaches: 'Why, man! do you sit thinking there, and are too proud to turn the bread? Whatever be your family, with such manners and sloth, what trust can be put in you hereafter? If you were even a nobleman, you will be glad to eat the bread which you neglect to attend to.' The king, though stung by her upbraidings, yet heard her with patience and mildness; and roused by her scolding, took care to bake her bread as she wished."—Turner, Anglo-Saxons, i. 562.

brought away the booty; if vanquished, they had only to regain their entrenchments. The impunity with which these sorties were made, and the success which frequently accompanied them, induced many other loyal thanes to repair to their monarch in Ethelingey. This is by far the most striking era of his life. Here was, indeed, a school in which he was not only disciplining his own mind, — a mind that greatly required such discipline — but inuring his most attached thanes to fatigue, contempt of danger, frequent hunger, and, above all, to confidence in themselves. By this mode of life, he and they became skilful generals; all his followers, determined warriors. An important advantage gained about the same time by Odun, earl of Devon, over the Danish Ubba, who was surprised and slain in the tent, added new life to the royal companions, and caused the whole nation to indulge the hope that the Saxon power would yet be restored. The sorties of the little garrison at Ethelingey were henceforth more frequent and more vigorous. Sometimes the king was with them; sometimes he remained occupied in reading, or meditating on the actions of illustrious men. On one of the latter occasions, a stranger, as we are first told by Ingulf of Croyland, knocked at the gate and demanded food "for the love of Christ." The king, who could now feel for another, called one of his thanes, and commanded that bread should be given to the poor man. The thane retired to obey him, but soon returned to say that there was one loaf of bread only in the fortress, and that, if the warriors, then absent on a sortie, should bring none with them in the evening, there would be no bread for his queen and children, who had lately joined him. Yet he insisted that the loaf should be divided, and half of it given to the beggar, — observing that God was powerful enough to supply them with whatever they might want. Ingulf adds, that he soon afterwards fell asleep, and that St. Cuthbert appeared to him, promising immediate success over the enemy. — This anecdote, though unnoticed by any writer until two centuries after

Alfred, may yet be true: we can only hope that it is. However it be, the deliverance of England was at hand. The monarch, by confidential messengers, acquainted his followers in Wilts, Hants, and Somersetshire, that he was ready to strike a blow for the independence of England, and requested all able to bear arms to meet him on a certain day east of Selwood forest. The result is known to every body: one decisive victory replaced him on the throne, and so effectually humbled the Danes, that they were glad to become his vassals. He placed them, with their chiefs, whom he had compelled to embrace Christianity, in East Anglia, which comprehended the whole of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, and Essex, with a small portion of Herts, Bedfordshire, and Huntingdonshire. It may, however, be doubted whether this was a wise policy. More than once he had to march against the turbulent inhabitants, who could never be well affected to his reign, and who were generally ready to join any new disembarkation. But Guthrum, their king, is believed to have continued faithful; the insurrections were therefore partial, and easily subdued.*

878 to 898. During the rest of his reign, Alfred was indeed able to maintain the integrity of his dominions, but his difficulties were great, and would have overpowered any other man. That, after the death of Guthrum, he had to contend with Hastings, the most valiant, Rollo perhaps excepted, of all the northern chieftains, who had for thirty years laid waste France, is undoubted. It was in 893 that Hastings made his first descent on our shores. He could rely on the neutrality at least, —perhaps the succour, private or open—of his countrymen in Northumbria and East Anglia; and in reality they assisted him as far as they could. And he could also rely on his own followers, who could not, like the Anglo-Saxons, return to their occupations the day

* Authorities: Saxon Chronicle (sub annis). Asserius Menevensis, de Rebus Gestis Aelfredi, p. 330. Ingulfus Croylandensis Historia (apud Gale, Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores, tom. i.). Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis (in regno Aelfredi).

their military term of duty expired. This defection was often disastrous, and might be fatal to Alfred. To avert it, he adopted a most judicious expedient: he detained half only of his army in the camp, and permitted the other half to return and resume their agricultural labours, each party to relieve the other after the expiration of the usual term. Hastings continued in the intrenchments which he had thrown up at Milton, near Sittingbourn, overawed by the force which watched his motions, and which cut off his junction with another body of piratical troops lying to the south-east of Kent. This was excellent policy in the Saxon king; not only, by his position in the weald of Kent, was he enabled to prevent the junction, but as Hastings, who was a terrible enemy, and was not to be driven to desperation, lay near to the Thames, a retreat to the ships was thus left open. But this pirate was a man of profound cunning, and unexampled for the arts of deception: he contrived, at length, to lull the vigilance of his enemy by sending his two sons to the Saxon camp, to be instructed in the faith of Christ, and by professing his intention to leave the realm; and he marched — but only to effect a junction with the Danes of Essex. He had not indeed reached Farnham in Surrey, before he was assailed by the Saxons, and his troops driven into the Thames, he himself escaping with difficulty, and desperately wounded. But he was not discouraged; with a determined band of followers he plunged into the midst of East Anglia, while they intrenched themselves in the isle of Mersey. He now implored the aid of his countrymen, and had soon the satisfaction to perceive that two powerful diversions were made in his favour by those of Northumbria, no less than of East Anglia. Two piratical armaments,—one proceeding southwards, the other sailing northwards by the Orkneys, the Hebrides, and the Irish channel, until they met in the Bristol channel, — visited Exeter and a fortress in the south of the county. The position of Alfred was now critical. He knew that the Welsh were not well affected to his

superiority; that in the earlier part of his reign they had often joined the pagans; and that, if they obtained possession of Devonshire, their success might be the signal of a general rising. He therefore raised the siege of the Danish fortresses in Mersey, or rather he left some of his eastern forces to prosecute it in his absence, and hastened towards Exeter. His departure from the eastern coast, which was exposed to the genius and valour of Hastings, would have been most disastrous, had not he trained a number of excellent generals, who well supplied his absence, and who pursued the Danes from county to county, eager, and not, as formerly, averse from the fight. While he raised the siege of Exeter, the Scandinavian chief was defeated: when the Saxon monarch was at liberty to retire, and to assist his thanes in the pursuit of that formidable enemy, the success was more decisive. The Danes were defeated with great slaughter on the banks of the Severn, and compelled to regain their intrenchments on the coast of Essex.—This course of advantages must be attributed to the policy of Alfred in building fortresses on such points as were most likely to be assailed. Another expedient, that of constructing a fleet able to cope with the Northmen on their own element, was adopted; and though many years were required before the Saxons could make any effectual head at sea, he had at length the joy of seeing more than one fleet victorious in a naval engagement. But though so frequently subdued, they were not dispirited; they had no intention to leave a country which had afforded them so much booty; and they prepared for another struggle with a desperate intrepidity unknown to any other people. Hastings raised a new army in East Anglia and Northumbria; penetrated to Chester; was followed by his indefatigable enemy, and besieged in his intrenchments; yet he contrived to ravage North Wales, to revisit Northumbria, and to descend by the eastern coast to his old station, Mersey in Essex. Such a man would have triumphed over any other competitor; and for that

competitor he was nearly a match. In spite of all the genius, all the activity, all the valour of Alfred, and the flower of Saxon chivalry, he traversed most of the kingdom with an audacity that must surprise us. During three entire years he was thus enabled to keep the field; but in the end, seeing that he was sure to be defeated in every general engagement, and forced to forsake every entrenchment, he, or rather his followers, cooled in their ardour: many disbanded themselves; many accompanied Hastings to the French coast, where he renewed his depredations against the descendants of Charlemagne, and where at length he wrested an important fief from the reigning monarch. The fleets of Alfred finished what his armies had left undone; and though isolated depredations were sometimes made on some parts of the coast, there was no longer a combined force, no longer an able general to oppose.*

But the internal administration of Alfred is the object most worthy of our contemplation. After the depredations had laid the kingdom waste, banished literature, and almost religion, introduced a general disregard of the laws, and, in fact, an ignorance of them in men whose duty it was to administer them, his task of reformation was gigantic enough: indeed, scarcely less gigantic than that of expelling the Northmen. The trouble which he took with a proud, ignorant, rapacious nobility, to convince them that patriotism was their best interest, appears to have been incessant. For example, he strongly urged upon them the necessity of constructing fortified places, against which the Danish power might dash itself to pieces. They promised to obey; but so fond were they of dissipation, so loth to incur expense for any other object than their present individual gratifications, that in three cases out of four they neglected to do so until the enemy had again laid waste their possessions, perhaps taken their children captive, and reduced themselves to want. If,

872 to 901.

* The same authorities, with the addition of the French historians in the collection of Duchesme, Hist. Norman. Scriptores.

however, their repentance arrived too late to benefit themselves, it was useful to others; since an example of this kind,—an example which the king never failed to display—served his purposes more effectually than his exhortations, his public proclamations, or even his positive commands. But his greatest trouble was with his ealdermen, bishops, sheriffs, and all entrusted with the administration of the laws. These (except the bishops) were so ignorant, that he was compelled to proclaim, either that they should submit to be instructed, or resign their dignities. It was no comfortable thing for men advanced in years — who had hitherto seen little but the camp — to learn their letters, to read the royal proclamation, and the decrees of the wittena-gemots; yet even this labour was preferable to the alternative of resignation. Some who were obstinately perverse, or incurably stupid, were unceremoniously deposed; or if a few of the latter were allowed to retain their posts, it was on the express condition of the laws being constantly repeated to them night and day, until they were deeply impressed on the memory. Some of them he had a summary method of correcting—by means of the gallows: if old Horne, author of the *Mirroir des Justices*, be right, he put forty-four corrupt judges to death in one year. This is probably an exaggeration, yet it is one that must be admitted in proof of his judicial reforms. For his severity in this respect he has been justly condemned: there is indeed reason to believe that he practised it soon after his accession, and that it was one of the causes which alienated the great from his authority. But if he alienated the great, he was the friend of the poor, who "besides him had no helper, or very few helpers, in all the kingdom. Absorbed by their own concerns, the rich and powerful cared little for those below them." In the end, however, his policy triumphed. Sensible that appeals from their decisions might and probably would, be carried to the throne, the local judges were careful to understand the law, and to decide by its provisions. When they decided wrongly,

he sent for them, to learn from their own mouths whether they had done so through ignorance or through corruption. If through the former, he reproached them for accepting an office to the duties of which they were inadequate: if through the latter, the chastisement was severe.*

According to Ingulf, who is followed by most modern writers, we are indebted to Alfred for the division of England into counties or shires: but this statement is incorrect; they existed long before the reign of this monarch. Equally untrue is another, that he established the courts of those shires, since we find allusion to them in the laws of his predecessors. These courts appear to have been held twice in the year, — in spring and autumn. Two judges presided, the bishop and the ealdorman, or, in the absence of the latter, the high sheriff. The number of assessors was generally twelve, the same as our jury, but we sometimes read of thirty-six, and their functions were similar, only that they appear to have had more authority than their modern successors. The reason of this, doubtless, was that the assessors were *nobles* or *thanes*, the great military vassals of the state. That unanimity was necessary in every verdict, may be inferred from the punishment which Alfred inflicted on Cadwine, one of the judges. On the trial of a culprit, three jurors were inclined to save, nine to condemn him: the judge too inclined to the opinion of his guilt; and, on finding the three would not give way, he substituted three others in their stead, and by this means obtained an unanimous verdict. For this excess of authority he was deservedly hung. — The jurisdiction of their shire gemots was most ample: it extended over the affairs of religion, over the revenues of the crown, no less than over the suits of individuals. Perhaps we may doubt whether even the laws passed in the supreme council of the witan could have effect until they were sanctioned by these shire motes: certainly they were first submitted to these assemblies

872 to 901.

* Asserius Menevensis, De Rebus, &c. p. 69, &c.

before they were binding on the inferior tribunals. Though twelve thanes only sat in judicial trials, all in the country were bound to attend the periodical mote: if any one were prevented by indisposition, or duties too pressing to be deferred, he was compelled to send in his place his steward, or his chaplain, with his bailiff and four of his chief tenants. Beneath this court was that of the *hundred*, the institution of which has also, on the authority of Ingulf, been ascribed to Alfred, but with the same inaccuracy. The hundred is, in fact, the *pagus* of Tacitus, and is repeatedly mentioned in the ancient codes of Germany; codes from which those of the Anglo-Saxons were immediately derived. We will not here enter into the disputation respecting the origin of the term, as our design is not to explain the system of Saxon legislation, but to show what in it was, and what was not, indebted to this monarch. We may, however, observe, that no hypothesis hitherto framed is so reasonable as that which makes each of these subdivisions originally consist of 100 freemen capable of bearing arms. As each freeman, when the country was apportioned among the conquerors, received a portion of land (the exact quantity we should vainly attempt to ascertain, — probably it varied in different situations), sufficient, not merely for the maintenance of his family, in all its ramifications, but of his serfs, who were in the proportion of three to one in regard to the free-born, we do not think the limits of the modern *hundreds* too extensive for the establishment of 100 patriarchal chiefs, especially when we recollect that the greater part of each allotment was uncultivated, and fit only for pasture. How often the *hundred-mote* was assembled, and what the extent of its jurisdiction, we need not inquire; we know only that the president was one of the king's reeves. Nor do we believe that Alfred first established the division of *tithings*, of which there were ten in each hundred; but of which the patriarchal head were probably never so low as *ten*. In fact, by superficia. inquirers into the ancient Saxon economy, that is, by

nearly all our modern historians, every change has been ascribed to that monarch. That he first divided the kingdom into counties and hundreds, and first established separate courts in each, is, as we have seen, at variance with fact; since allusions to these may be found prior to his day. That he instituted the *trial by jury* is equally untrue, since that admirable judicial form had existed from the very foundation of the Saxon states: even the *grand-jury* was known prior to his reign. What else, indeed, can be inferred from the statement, that when the hundred-mote was assembled, the reeve, with twelve of the oldest thanes, went out to inquire into all offences committed within the jurisdiction, having sworn not to *present* any one who was innocent, nor to screen any one who was guilty? And it is no less certain that he did not invent or introduce the system of *frankpledge* the most singular, perhaps, of all the Anglo-Saxon institutions, yet not wholly unknown to some of the Germanic codes. It was the mutual responsibility under which the members of the same tithing lay, to present any one of their hamlet or district who might be accused of any crime to the court of the hundred, that he might be tried on the charge. It arose from the very circumstances of society. Where the royal authority was distant; where the people were inveterately attached to robbery and bloodshed; where private revenge was sanctioned by law and usage; where the hasty and uncertain levies of the sheriff was the only power established, for the suppression of violence, often perpetrated in a distant part of the country, there was no hope of security for *individual* responsibility. It was therefore thrown on the community in which the offender dwelt,—all being obliged to make reparation for the crimes of any person among them. If he were convicted, the penalty was levied from his own substance: if he escaped, they were compelled to make, in his stead, the pecuniary compensation demanded by law. It was consequently their interest, no less than for the honour of the tithing, that,

if suspected, he should be immediately brought before the tribunal of the hundred. Hence we may account for the extreme caution with which men were admitted into any particular tithing. As it might have to pay for his misdeeds, it was justified in this scrutiny. This was the more advanced stage of conventional security: prior to it, every person had a fidejussor, or bondsman, who answered for his appearance if accused, and for his penalty if he fled. This security was often insufficient; and it was hard on individuals, — two reasons which led to the substitution of communal responsibility. Yet that of the *individual* did not wholly cease; probably because in many cases the tithing refused to receive a suspected person, or a stranger, unless some individual would be answerable for his conduct. This system of frankpledge was not Alfred's: we find allusions to it at a much earlier period, — in the reigns of Lother and Edric, kings of Kent (673—694), who certainly did not invent it, since, as we have before intimated, it had previously subsisted in the bosom of the Germanic forests. There is no reason to believe that they *introduced* it: in their time it formed a part of the common or unwritten law, and they were probably the first to give it the sanction of a statute.*

872 to 901. But though Alfred cannot have the honour of introducing any one of these institutions, he might probably improve them: probably he enforced a *new* division of the counties, hundreds, and tithings, and placed the courts of the two former (we have no proof that there was ever one in the last) on a better footing. It appears certain that he appointed a new judge — one of his reeves or sheriffs — to the presidency of the hundred-mote. And let us not suppose that the hundred and shire motes, from which appeals might be carried to the supreme witan, were the only tribunals in the country.

* Asserius Menevensis, De Rebus Gestis, &c. (in multis locis). Wilkins, Leges Anglo-Saxonicæ, tom. i. p. 28, &c. Turner, Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 149, &c.
Here we must again request the reader to reject the statements of Hume, which are wholly at variance with authority.

There was the jurisdiction called *sac* and *soc*, which appears to have been of a feudal character: probably it was the privilege vested in the chief proprietor of a district of holding a court in his own hall,—hence called the hall-mote,—for the twofold purpose of enforcing his own rights, and of deciding the disputes of his vassals. And there is reason to suspect that many of the great dignitaries, whether civil, military, or ecclesiastical, in the Anglo-Saxon commonwealth, held tribunals subordinate to those of the hundred and shire: the king, the ealdorman, the sheriff, the thane, the bishop, the abbot, appear to have been invested with the privilege; but whether *ex officio*, or in virtue of the royal charter, or by the concession of the witan, we should vainly inquire. To watch over the proceedings of all these tribunals, the king despatched his reeves into the provinces. Sometimes they assisted the ealdorman, sheriff, or bishop; sometimes they opened courts of their own; and decided all cases that came before them, whether of the first instance, or appeals from the local tribunals. In this respect Alfred was remarkably active. Not only were such of his royal judges as he knew to be worthy of trust thus spread over the counties, but he himself was a vigilant and an inexorable judge. What, indeed, but unbending severity was adapted to such a state of society as that of England during the earlier part of this monarch's reign? We read that bands of robbers were numerous; nay, that certain hundreds made open war on each other with as much impunity as sovereign states. Nor have we a mere general description of the evil: individual instances are particularised. Thus one man entered the house of his friend, ravished the wife, and killed the father who endeavoured to protect her.—Another man set fire to a house, and burned an aged man who was unable to escape.—A third man was peaceably occupied when another came and, without the least provocation, ran him through the body.—A certain man was confined to his bed: his enemy came, took away both, and threw

both into a ditch where he perished. To bind people and leave them bound, remote from succour; to ravish women, disfigure and maim the stronger sex, consume houses by fire, drive away oxen, horses, sheep, and swine, appear to have been so many amusements to this savage people. But Alfred did not understand such amusement; and by his vigilant, severe, sometimes, it must be confessed, tyrannical mode of repression, he contrived to extirpate it. Such indeed was his success, that if his biographer Asser does not embellish, golden bracelets were suspended by the public roads, yet nobody dared to remove them. Ingulf adds, that if a traveller lost his money, when he returned the same way — whether on the following day or in a month — he was sure to find it, whole and untouched.*

872 to 901. For much of this internal tranquillity the country was indebted to the laws, no less than to the personal activity, of Alfred. They were derived first from the codes (if such they may be called) of Ethelbert (560—616), Lother and Edric (673—694), Wihtred (694—725), and St. Ina (688—728); secondly, from the unwritten customs of the people, which generally reigned in the tribunals, and always formed the basis of decision in cases where the written or statute law was silent; thirdly, from the book of Exodus, the canons of councils, and the monarch's own experience. In severity, as we are prepared to expect, they are far more remarkable than those of his predecessors, since they substitute the last penalty for the pecuniary mulcts which formed so leading a portion of the Germanic codes. A slight glance at the manner in which three of the most ordinary crimes were visited at different periods is curious, and may be instructive.

Homicide.—In the laws of Ethelbert we perceive that this crime was redeemable by pecuniary compensation. Sometimes this compensation was twofold:

* The same authorities, with the addition of Horne, Mirror of Justice; Ingulf of Croyland, Historia; and sir John Spelman, Life of Alfred book ii. Well may the last break out into admiration at such a relation!

there was the *were*, or private penalty, which was paid by the murderer to the kindred of the deceased, as the persons who most suffered by the deed; and there was the *wite*, or public penalty, which was paid to the state as an atonement for the loss of a social member: the latter, however, was, in the earlier stages of Anglo-Saxon legislation, frequently overlooked; the former was always exacted. The general mulct for the murder of a freeman, whatever his dignity, was 100*s*., which constituted the *were*; but if the murder took place by an open grave, there was also a *wite* of 20*s*. If the *were* was uniform, the *wite* was various enough. Thus if a host killed a very noble guest, it was 80*s*.; for one less noble, 60*s*.; for a common noble, 40*s*. The place, as we have just seen in regard to an open grave, had also its influence in determining the amount of the *wite*: if the crime were committed in a king's town, it was 50*s*.; if in a bishop's or the baron's, 12*s*. As might have been expected, these penalties were far from sufficient to repress the crime; and by Lother and Edric sixteen new laws were added, more severe in character than the preceding. Thus the were for the murder of a noble by a slave was raised from 100*s*. to 300*s*., and the culprit was delivered over to justice. The penalty had to be paid by the master of the slave, — a proof that in most of these assassinations the slaves were but the instruments. If the victim were a common freeman, the were was the same, 100*s*.; but there was a wite, including the additional price of a man, and the surrender of the homicide. St. Ina added to the amount of the wite by a graduated scale, according to the circumstances of the homicide and the victim. But all would not do; and we cannot be surprised that Alfred should substitute the last penalty for the deliberate homicide. But he denounced the same penalty in other cases which had previously been settled by custom; at least we find no written law concerning them. Thus he who beat or cursed his parent, he who bound and sold a freeman, he who committed bestiality, he who

sacrificed to idols, he who devised the death either of the king or of his own immediate lord, he who practised sorcery, was subject to the same infliction.

BODILY INJURIES will exhibit the same progressive scale of compensation. In the code of Ethelbert the loss of an ear was estimated at 12*s.*, of an eye at 50*s.*, of a nose at 20*s.*, of a foot at 50*s.*, of the large toe at 10*s.*, of any other toe at 5*s.*, of the thumb at 20*s.*, of the forefinger, at 8*s.* of the next finger at 4*s.*, of the ring finger at 6*s.*, of the little finger at 11*s.* Passing over the intervening codes, which exhibit some little increase in the compensation, we find that Alfred awarded 30*s.* for the loss of an ear, 60*s.* for that of the nose, 30*s.* for that of a thumb, 15*s.* for that of the fore-finger, and so on in proportion.

CHASTITY, like all other crimes, was punished according to the social rank of the offender and the victim. In the code of Ethelbert, he who sinned with the maid servant of a king paid 50*s.*, with his grinding servant 25*s.*, with any one of his inferior servants 12*s.* The chastity of an earl's domestic was of course much less, since 12*s.* only redeemed it in the highest class. That of a domestic in the house of a common freeman, if she were even of the highest class, was 6*s.* only; while a few pence amply atoned for the crime with an inferior. But if the purity of domestic servants — a species of slaves, though not so degraded as those occupied in the fields — was thus lightly estimated, the case was very different in regard to free, still more in regard to noble women. The freeman who seduced the wife of another paid just as much as if he had killed a man in his own rank of life; and he was, in addition, compelled to buy another wife for the injured husband, and bring her to him. Alfred raised the penalty in all these cases; and even where the act was not committed, he graduated the compensation by the nature of the assault. If a man touched the breast of a woman, or took indecent liberties with her, or threw her down, he made atonement in his purse. But, it may be asked,

suppose the offender had no money to satisfy the law? In this case there can be no doubt that he suffered in person. Alfred, in particular, wished to enforce the law of talion, — an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, skin for skin; and that he succeeded in restoring internal peace we have already seen. In short, so careful were the Saxon laws to prevent the scenes of violence so natural to the people, that the king's highway, the church, the market, the town, nay, every private house, had its own distinct security. A sword drawn in one place might subject the offender to death, or to an enormous compensation; in another place, the penalty was a few shillings only.—But we need not pursue the subject further. Enough has been said to evince the care with which Alfred laboured for the tranquillity of his people, and the success with which his efforts were attended.*

11. As a man of letters and a patron of letters, Alfred has remarkable claims on our attention, We have before seen that his education was neglected; and that after he had learned to read, and when his soul was anxious for knowledge, either he could not procure suitable instructors, or he was so harassed by the incursions of the Danes, and by the turbulence of his own people, as to have no leisure for the pursuit. These difficulties were sufficiently formidable; but he had another, and a greater, in the disease to which he was almost perpetually subject. From infancy to manhood he was assailed by a species of piles, which left him, we are told, few intervals of relief. But the relation is incredible; for he delivered himself with ardour to the sports of the field, to the most violent athletic exercises. There can, however, be no doubt that he was a very frequent victim of the disorder, and that it baffled the skill of his physicians. Whether this was the devil's work through envy of his great qualities, or God's in chastisement of his transgressions, puzzled the leeches

860 to 872.

* Leges Ethelberti, p. 1—7. Leges Hlotharii et Eadrici, p. 7—9. Leges Aelfredi, p. 28—46. (apud Wilkins, Leges Anglo-Saxonicæ, tom. i.)
For the similarity of these Saxon Laws with those of other Germanic nations, see Europe during the Middle Ages (Cab. Cyc.), vol. ii.

and divines of his court: as he himself was accustomed to ascribe every thing to Heaven, he believed that it had been divinely sent him, lest he should fall into the vices usual to his age. Feeling that his temperament was amorous, he had, says Asser, prayed for some such visitation that he might escape pollution; and he was of opinion that his prayer had been answered. It is, however, more probable that the tempter was subdued by other means. He was accustomed, we are told, to rise at daybreak, to visit the churches and the shrines of saints, and to pass some time in devotion. Of the disorder, whatever it was, we are told that he was at length cured, and, as *he* thought, through the favour of Heaven. He could now marry; and in his twentieth year he led to the altar Elswitha, daughter of a Mercian nobleman. But his period of impunity was very short: on the very day of his nuptials, says his biographer, he was assailed by a new disorder, which left him few intermissions to the day of his death. In this relation there is just enough to pique curiosity, but not to satisfy it. From the words of Asser we might be led to suppose that this disorder was the fruit of intemperance during the nuptial festivities, — festivities continued many days and nights.* Probably it was a return of his former complaint †, with aggravated symptoms. However this be, there can be no doubt that his complaint was a dreadful one. — "If," adds Asser, "through the mercy of God, it left him for a single hour night or day, yet he was filled with apprehensions of its unwelcome return." ‡

872, &c. That in circumstances so afflicting, Alfred contrived to acquire much knowledge, is the most wonderful feature of his character, and proves him to have been

* "Cum ergo nuptias honorabiliter in Mercia factas inter innumerabiles utriusque sexus populos solemniter celebraret, *post diuturna die noctuque* convivia, subito et immenso, atque omnibus medicis incognito confestim coram omni populo conceptus est dolore." — *Asser*, p. 40.

† "Alii ficum existimant; quod genus infestissimi doloris etiam ab infantiâ habuit." — *Ibid.* This is a fair presumption that the disease was the same.

‡ Asserius Menevensis, De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi, p. 42.

truly great. After his accession to the crown, he perceived that merely to read Saxon was a poor advantage. Probably it contained little beyond the songs which the natives learned, and which though the king loved as well as the rest of his people, were fitted only to amuse, not to instruct. The stores of knowledge were confined to the Latin tongue, into which, we have reason to believe, many of the best Greek writers had been translated. He cared not, indeed, for the writers we are accustomed to denominate *the classic*, — writers who do not in the aggregate contain as much wisdom as may be found in many single volumes of less antiquity. He knew that Latin was the universal language of the enlightened; but he valued it chiefly because it contained the knowledge which was "able to make him wise unto salvation," — the Word of God, and the comments of the most eminent fathers and schoolmen. So long as he was ignorant of it he considered himself "ignorant of divine wisdom, and of the liberal knowledge."* His first care was to surround himself with learned men. Werfrith, whom he afterwards made bishop of Worcester, an ecclesiastic well versed in Scripture; Plegmund, a hermit, whom he soon made archbishop of Canterbury; Ethelstan and Werwulf, both Mercian priests, and imbued with literature, were his earliest instructors. Whenever he had leisure, by day or night, these men read to him, and translated for him (he was never without one of them); and by these men, says Asser, he obtained some knowledge of nearly all books, though he was unable to read them. Not satisfied with their aid, he sent ambassadors to France for other learned men; and he obtained Grimbald and John, both monks, both priests, and both eminent for their profane and sacred attainments. Grimbald was honoured with the special invitation of Alfred, and was allowed by Fulco, archbishop of Rheims, to forsake the monastery of the Bertins for the purpose of instructing

* "Querelebatur et assiduo gemebat suspirio, eo quod Deus Omnipotens eum expertem divinæ sapientiæ et liberalium artium fecisset."

the English king and people. Concerning John, the other monk, there has been much dispute. He certainly was not the celebrated Johannes Scotus or Erigena, the friend of Charles the Bald, and the ally of Hincmar against the fanatical Gottschalk.* In the first place Erigena was a *layman*, while this man was both monk and priest. In the second, the country of the one is sufficiently denoted by his surname of Scotus, or Erigena (both terms implying the *Irishman*); while the other, as the monk of St. David's assures us, was an *old* Saxon, that is, a native of Saxony in Germany. In the third place, the circumstances of their lives, so far as they can be ascertained, vary considerably: we cannot enter into an examination of them; but every reader who institutes the inquiry will soon subscribe to the opinion of Fleury, — that the two ought not to be confounded. But however this be, he and Grimbald were of the highest service to Alfred. By them his intellect was expanded, his knowledge augmented; and the rewards which he bestowed upon them amply repaid them for their labours.† He was, indeed, a munificent rewarder, no less than a zealous seeker, of merit.‡

But the most useful of Alfred's literary instructors

* See Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 265. (CAB. CYC.)

† "Ealdsaxonum genere," says Asser. Wise, Turner, and others, misled by Ingulf, William of Malmesbury, and Matthew of Westminster, persist in confounding the two Rightly does Mabillon observe that they were two different men: — "Alius perinde fuit a Johanne Scoto sive Erigenâ, Caroli Calvi familiari." — *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben.* sæc. iv. pars 2. p 506.

Throughout his history of the Anglo-Saxons, Mr. Turner confounds them. The strangest of all is, that he makes this John a disciple of Bede. Suppose he was fifteen years old on the death of that venerable monk in 735, he must, on his assassination about the year 890, have attained a good old age!

Whether the sophist at Malmesbury, who was stabbed by his own scholars there, and this John, whom, as we shall hereafter perceive, was abbot of Ethelingey, were one and the same person, is a very different question Notwithstanding the arguments of Mr. Turner (vol. iii. p. 421. note), we believe that they were two individuals.

‡ Fulco Rhemigiensis, Epistola ad Regem (apud Wise, p. 81.). Asserius Menevensis, De Rebus, &c. p 46, &c. Venerabilis Joannis Abbatis Æthelingiensis Elogium Historicum (apud Mabillonum, Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. sæc. iv. pars 2. p. 506.). De S. Grimbaldo Abbate Wintoniensi apud eundem, sæc. v. p. 1.). The monks of St. Maur, Histoire Littéraire de la France, tom. v. p. 514, &c. Fleury, Histoire Ecclésiastique, tom. xi. p. 576, &c. Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxonicæ, tom. iii. A.D. 883.

was the biographer we have so frequently quoted, the monk of St. David's, whose simple relation shall be given in his own words:—

"At this time I too was called by the king from the utmost confines of Britain to the seat of the Saxon 878, &c. prince. Having resolved to undertake the long journey, accompanied by conductors of that nation, I reached the country of the dextral, or, as they are called, South Saxons; and there, in the regal villa of Dene, I first saw the monarch. By him I was graciously received; and in the conversation which followed he earnestly requested me to enter his service, and become his friend,— to abandon all I had beyond the Severn, and he would furnish me with greater preferments. I replied that I could not make such a promise without rashness: that, unless compelled, I could not, for any earthly consideration, abandon the holy places where I had been reared, taught, honoured, professed, and raised to the priesthood. He rejoined: "If this proposal does not satisfy you, give me at least half of your time; remain six months of every year with me, the other six in Wales!" My reply was,—"Neither can I, with decency or without blame, promise even this until I have consulted my brethren." But when I perceived that he was so anxious for my services (why I could not tell), I did promise that if life were spared me I would return in six months, with such an answer as might be useful and agreeable to us all. As the permission seemed probable, I was allowed to depart on the fourth day, with a pledge that I would return at the appointed time. But soon after I had left him, I was assailed at Winchester by a bad fever, which during twelve months and one week rendered me hopeless of life. And as I did not visit him at the appointed time, he wrote to inquire the cause of my delay, and to hasten my departure. Being unable to ride, I acquainted him by letter with the cause, and added, that if I should recover I would fulfil my promise. I did recover; and with the full permission of all my

brethren, and for the benefit of the holy place and all its inmates, I resolved to enter the royal service, on condition that it should be required six months only in every year."*

As a monk, bound by the vow of obedience to his lawful superiors, Asser could not take any step without the consent of these superiors. It is, however, clear that he was by no means unwilling to shine at court. One motive chiefly induced the community of St. David's to sanction the absence of their brother, — the hope that the regal protection would free them from the incursions of a fierce Welsh prince, who, like all the princes of that barbarous people, was a freebooter, and, though a Christian in name, always ready to plunder monasteries and churches. Asser repaired a second time to the monarch; and was compelled to remain eight months instead of six near the royal person. He read aloud whatever books the king wished; and made himself so useful, so agreeable, that he could not, without extreme difficulty, obtain permission to depart. But, when he did obtain it, he had abundant reason to be satisfied with his reward. That very day he unexpectedly received from the royal hand two writings, containing the gift of the monastery of Ambresbury in Wiltshire, and that of Barnwell in Somersetshire, with all that they contained. Besides these, he was presented with a magnificent silk pall, with as much incense as a strong man could carry, and with other gifts. But the manner in which these things were conferred was more agreeable than the things themselves: they were, observed the king, but trifles, a mere earnest of greater things hereafter. In fact, during the very next visit, the monk received Exeter, with the whole district belonging to it in Wessex and Cornwall; and his daily gifts in addition were, he tells us, innumerable. It is impossible to approve this prodigality: like all other kings, Alfred was open to favouritism; and, like all others, he was a bad dis-

* Asserius Menevensis, De Rebus Gestis, p. 47.

penser of church patronage. How could this ecclesiastic suffice to the government of two monasteries, to the great church of Exeter, to his duties at St. David's and the royal court? He himself had evidently no compunction in receiving these pluralities, — a circumstance not very honourable to the age. A worse evil is, that this ill-judged liberality blinded him to the errors, the faults, perhaps the crimes, of his royal benefactor.*

In the year 887, that is, towards his fortieth year, 887.
Alfred made his first attempt to translate Latin.† It was accident that turned his mind to the acquisition; for though he had long envied it in others, he must have abandoned all hope of enjoying it himself. As he and Asser were one day seated together, conversing, as usual, on literary and religious matters, the abbot quoted a Latin sentiment. The monarch, being much pleased with it, pulled a book of devotions from his bosom, and requested that the sentence might be written in it. In vain did the other turn over the leaves of the little manual: not one spare corner could be found for the quotation. After some consideration he proposed to write it in a blank book, to which should also be committed any other sentences that might hereafter please the king. The latter readily assented; Asser prepared the volume; the quotation was immediately entered; and in the same conversation three others were added to it. That he might not forget their import, Alfred caused the abbot to give him a literal translation of each, and this translation he placed immediately under the original. Subsequently the same method of citing and of translating was pursued, until the volume was filled. The king was delighted at finding that, by means of the Saxon version, he could account for the construction of each word in the original. Probably at the same time he began to consult the in-

* Asserius Menevensis, p. 50.

† "In 887, Alfred obtained the happiness he had long coveted, of reading the Latin authors in their original language." — *Turner*, vol. ii. p. 16. How *could* this judicious writer so misapprehend the passage?"

flexions of the words, and their syntax, or collocation in a sentence: certainly from this day forward he devoted most of his leisure time to transcribing, and rendering into Saxon,* the best passages to be found in the ancient writers of Rome. This book, which at length equalled the Psalter in magnitude, he called his Enchiridion; and great was the delight which he took in it: it was his companion night and day; and his industry in filling it is compared by his biographer with that which the bee exhibits in collecting, from widely scattered flowers, the choicest sweets, and depositing them safely in the common treasury.* It may, however, be doubted whether he made any solid proficiency in the language. His was not an age when its interminable inflexions, its complicated construction, its genders, government, and concord, were to be sufficiently impressed on the mind; nor can we suppose that he could, without perpetual aid, master its difficulties.† But this circumstance does not lessen his merit: so long as the world subsists, his ardour in the pursuit of knowledge must be the theme of universal admiration.‡

887, But Alfred was not satisfied with his ability to con-
&c. strue the language; he resolved to translate himself, as well as to direct others in translating, whole books from that language into the Saxon. He found his people barbarous: to enlighten them, books were necessary; and as there were none in the vulgar tongue calculated for the purpose, his object could only be obtained by recurring to that which contained the universal learning of the age. It was necessary to begin with his ecclesiastics, that they in their turn might be qualified to teach others. Hence his selection of St. Gregory's "Liber Pastoralis Curæ," which treats at

* "Velut apis fertilissima longe lateque gronnios interrogando discurrens, multimodos divinæ scripturæ flosculos inhianter et incessabiliter congregavit, queis præcordii sui cellulas densatum replevit."—P. 56. All old writers are fond of those juvenile images.

† There is not one instance, in all literary history, of a man beyond the age of thirty-five, attaining even a respectable acquaintance with the Latin. We have known many attempt it, but all were at length discouraged.

‡ Asserius Menevensis, ubi suprà.

great length on the duties of bishops, and all entrusted with the cure of souls. In this translation he was assisted, as he acknowledges in the preface, by Plegmund his archbishop, by Asser his bishop, by Grimbald his mass priest, and by John his mass priest. Sometimes he rendered it "word for word," but much more frequently "sense for sense:" in fact, all his translations are, in a greater or less degree, paraphrastic, — a proof, we think, that his knowledge of the original was imperfect. However this be, the work in question was much wanted; and it effected much good. In the Preface, which was entirely written by himself, Alfred endeavours, with much honourable zeal, to excite in his ecclesiastics a taste for ancient literature. In former times, he observes, when learning flourished in England when there were many wise men among clergy and laity, the country was prosperous; its kings were devout, and just; and its ecclesiastics anxious to learn and to teach: hence it was frequented by foreign students. But in *his* time there was a lamentable contrast: if knowledge must be acquired, English students were compelled to seek it abroad. Things, however, were not so bad as they had been: when he "took the kingdom," he did not recollect a single instance north of the Thames where a man could translate a letter from Latin into English; but, "thanks be to God!" he adds, "we have *now* some teachers." That there were any was, as we have already seen, owing to his own enlightened care. In the same composition he advises the bishops to imitate the example of their predecessors in the good old days; to remember the responsibility attached to all, both of acquiring and of communicating knowledge; and he exhorts them to see that all the freeborn youths of his kingdom be obliged to learn the art of reading English at least, and such, as would, of Latin. He also declares that the higher dignities shall be reserved for such as cultivate the Latin tongue.*

* Alfredus, Præfatio ad Pastorale S. Gregorii (apud Wise, p. 87, &c.).

Of the manner in which Alfred acquitted himself of this translation, we cannot judge, as if it be extant at all, it is nearly destroyed by fire. But in regard to three other translations,—" Boetius on the Consolations of Philosophy," " The History of Orosius," and " Bede's Ecclesiastical History,"—we have fortunately the means of estimating his taste and acquirements. We cannot, indeed, be judges of his style; but we can perceive in what sense he understood his authors, and in what manner he has illustrated their meaning. We may add that he is seldom a mere translator; in many passages he adds so much to his subject as to merit the character of an original writer.

The work of BOETHIUS has ever been the favourite of princes. Knowing by experience the instability of all human things, they have looked into it for consolation against the possible, nay the probable, arrival of the evil day. As Alfred, more than any other king, experienced that instability, we cannot be surprised at his attachment to this book. It appears, next to Holy Scripture, to have occupied the greatest share of his attention. Fortunately for our present object, the translation also exhibits the completest portrait of his own mind; in it, more than all his other translations, he records his own reflections and feelings. In fact, it is no translation; the greater portion of it is rather an imitation of the original. Even the arrangement is widely dissimilar. The original is divided into five books; Alfred has no books, but forty-two chapters, most of which are subdivided into sections.*

890, &c. The first six chapters of Alfred comprise the first book of Boethius; and some idea may be formed of the liberty taken with it, when we observe that the version does not, in extent, equal one third of the original. Nor is this all: in many places the meaning of that original has been mistaken; and in composition, the whole of this portion is so obscure, so meagre, so

* Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiæ. Alfred's Saxon version by Rawlinson and Cardale.

unsatisfactory, as to be worse than useless at the present day, however instructive it might be to our rude ancestors.—The next fifteen chapters, viz. to the twenty-first inclusive, which correspond to the second book, are not condensed, since the paraphrase in quantity of matter equals the original. Yet even here the version is much less clear, much less elegant, much less philosophic, than the Latin; in it we entirely lose the charm of narrative so conspicuous in the Roman sage; and we have occasionally the same blundering as in the earlier chapters. Thus, in the first chapter, designed as an introduction to the work, Alfred had made the venerable consul really guilty of treason towards Theodoric:—

"Then began he to devise and to meditate within himself in what manner he might deprive this unjust monarch (Theodoric) of the kingdom, and place it under the rule of better governors. Wherefore he privately sent letters to the Cesar at Constantinople, the chief city of the Greeks, and their metropolis; (because this Cesar was of the same family as the ancient lords of Rome) and prayed the emperor to succour the distressed Christians of the western city, both in regard to their religion and to their ancient liberties."

In his seventh chapter he commits another even more serious, if possible, than the preceding, and one which shows that he did not understand his author. Boethius, in his conversations with Philosophy, had bitterly complained of his change of circumstances,—that he had exchanged a parlour for a prison, liberty for irons, sumptuous fare for the vilest; that he had lost the society of the whole of his friends, his family, and his books, and, indeed, every thing for which life is tolerable. It was the aim of Philosophy to console him for the loss of that which had no value in itself, and which, even had it been valuable, was too fleeting in its possession to deserve the esteem of the wise. Early in the second book, hearing the upbraidings which the mournful prisoner addressed to Fortune, she

undertakes to vindicate that capricious being, and says: —

"But give me leave for a moment to personate Fortune, and in her name to remonstrate with thee: if thou wilt attend to me even in this assumed character, I shall soon convince thee how just these remonstrances are. — Why, friend, dost thou daily accuse me? why vent such bitter reproaches against me? In what have I injured thee? Of what possession really thine own have I bereft thee? Appear with me before whatever judge thou mayest select; produce thy title to honours and wealth; and if thou canst prove that either thou or any other person ever had a permanent property in such things, then will I grant that what thou art so eager to recover was indeed thine own."

Alfred pays no heed to the personification of Fortune in lieu of Philosophy, and continues the conversation between Philosophy and the sage, without observation of any kind: —

"I am still wishful to discourse further with thee concerning worldly goods. Why hast thou just upbraided me that thou hast lost them for my sake? Why dost thou reproach me as if thou, for my advantage, were deprived of thine own, — whether riches or dignity? Both were derived from me, and were only lent to thee. Let us argue the case before any judge thou wilt; and if thou canst prove that any man on earth ever possessed such things *as his own*, I will return unto thee all that thou supposest thou hast a right to claim."

Hence the meaning of the author is entirely lost. This too is one of the most literal, or rather let us say, one of the least paraphrastic, least licentious of the passages in the royal version.*

Who on earth could recognise the description of the author in the following paraphrase? †

* Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiæ, lib. i. et ii. Saxon version by Alfred, chap. i. and vii.

† Compare the translation with the original in the fourth book.

"In the Trojan war which happened of yore there was a king called Aulixes. And he held two fiefs under the Cesar, which were called Ithacige (Ithaca) and Retie (Rhetia); and the Cesar's name was Agamemnon. Then Aulixes went with his emperor to battle, and he had some hundred ships. And they were occupied some ten years in that war. And at length the king returned home with the Cesar, when they had conquered all that land: and of all his ships he had then no more than one, but it had three benches of rowers. There opposed him very boisterous weather and a stormy sea; and he was driven on an island in the Wendel sea. There was the daughter of Apolline, Job's (Jove's) son. Job was their king, who pretended that he would be the chief god: and the foolish people believed him, for that he was of royal kin; and thy knew no other gods in that age, but worshipped their kings for gods. Then should Job's father be a god too; his name was Saturnus; and all his kin they held as gods. And one of them was Appolline, of whom we have before spoken. This Apolline's daughter must needs be a goddess; and her name was Kirkê. She, people said, was much skilled in magic. And she dwelt on that island to which the king whom we have before mentioned was driven. She had there much company of thegns and of maidens also. Soon she perceived the forth-driven king, whom we have before mentioned, and whose name was Aulixes: then began she to love him, and he her, beyond measure; so that for love of her he neglected all his kingdom and his family; and with her he abode until his thegns would not longer remain with him; but for their country's love, and for their absence from it, they were determined to leave him. Then began false men to devise spells; and they said that by her magic she should work on these men, and turn them into wild beasts, and afterwards throw them into chains and fetters. Some, said they, should be changed into lions, and should roar instead of speaking.

Some should become wild boars, which when they would lament their fate, should only grunt. Some became wolves, and they howled when they would speak. Some became the kind of wild beast called the tiger. Thus was all this company turned into wild beasts of some kind,—each one into some particular beast,—except the king alone. All the food which men eat they refused, and would only have that which beasts eat. No likeness had they to men in body or in view; yet each one knew his mind as he before knew it. And that mind was very sorrowful through the miseries which they suffered.

Whoever reads the preceding with attention will, we think, agree with us, that though the acquirements of Alfred might be diversified, they were not very accurate; that he was unacquainted even with the Latin inflexions so far as to mistake the cases of proper names; and that he had not so much knowledge of antiquity as the most ordinary schoolboys of the present day.*

A modern historian, whose industry must ever command our praise †, speaks in the highest terms of the metaphysical acquirements of Alfred, whom he does not hesitate to place above the Roman philosopher. For evidence of this superiority, we are referred to the passage on Chance, both in the original and the imitation: —

Boethius: —

"Should Chance be defined as an event produced by motion, acting without design, and unconnected by a chain of causes, I should at once affirm Chance to be a mere *nothing*, — an empty sound, without any real use, except to denote the subject about which we might reason. For how can any thing happen without design, seeing that all things are, through God's Omnipotence, subjected to established order? That from nothing, nothing can be produced, is an axiom uni-

* Saxon version of Boethius, chap. xxxviii. sec. 1.
† Mr. Turner, History of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 63.

versally received by the ancient world; (yet it can be true only as applicable to all created things, and by no means true as applicable to their efficient Cause). But should any thing arise without the operation of a cause, it would of necessity proceed from nothing, which is impossible: therefore Chance is not what the preceding definition asserts it to be.*

"What, (said I) is there nothing fortuitous — nothing that can be called Chance? Is there not something, however incomprehensible to the vulgar, which may require such terms?

"My disciple Aristotle, (replied she) has with much clearness and probability thus explained the great question in his Physics: — 'If a thing be done for a specific end or purpose, but if through the joint agency of other causes a result different from the one intended is produced, then that result is said to be the effect of Chance. For example, if a labourer should dig the ground with the view of improving it, and should discover a treasure, that discovery is called the effect of Chance, because it was not designed by the agent. Yet this discovery does not arise from nothing; it has its own causes, which, unforeseen and unexpected, have brought about the result. If some person had not concealed the treasure, and if the labourer had not digged, in that very spot, the treasure would not have been found.' That concealment and this digging, therefore, must be the undesigning cause of this discovery; which results from them alone, and not from any intention of the human will. For certainly the design, neither of the person who hid the money, nor of him who trenched the ground, was that such discovery should be made; but, as I have just intimated, the accidental concurrence of two causes, viz. the one finding it convenient to dig where the other had concealed the treasure, led to the acquisition." †

* The reader must not forget that the former portion of Boethius is a conversation between him and Philosophy. It is Philosophy which has thus far spoken.

† Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiæ, lib. v. prosa 1.

Alfred: —

"I wish to know from thee whether there be ought in that which we often hear concerning some things, viz. that they may happen *by chance.*

"Then, (said he)* I will instruct thee by my speech, as I have always done; and I will say to thee that it is nought when men say that any thing can happen by chance; because every thing comes from something, and therefore it does not happen by chance: but if it had come from *nothing,* then it would happen by chance.

"Then said I; But whence came this name first?

"He replied; Aristoteles, my darling, has shown all this in the book called 'Physica.'

"Then said I; How has he shown it?

"Then he replied: Men formerly said, when a thing unmeaning happened, that it had by chance so happened: just as if any one were to delve in the ground, and there find a gold hoard, and then say that this happened by chance. I wot, however, that if the delver had not the earth dug, and if some man there had not the gold before hidden, then he would not have found it, no: wherefore, it was not by chance found. But the divine fore-ordering taught whom He would the gold to hide, and afterwards whom He would the gold to find." †

"Could any reasoner," asks Mr. Turner, "have p... this philosophical question more correctly or concisely?" We leave the reader to judge; and also to consider whether there is justice in the opinion that the reasoning of Boethius "is more diffused, and not so clear," as that of Alfred. ‡

By the same writer, our ancient monarch is highly praised for his clear distinction between the divine predestination and human liberty. The truth, however, is, that he had most confused notions on the subject.

* Alfred saxonises Philosophia by *Wisdom*, which is masculine.
† King Alfred's version, chap. xl. § 6.
‡ Turner, Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 63.

The last sentence of the preceding extract will prove that he confounded two attributes essentially distinct,—the divine Omniscience and Omnipotence. Surely the foreknowledge of God does not involve the necessity of every action. What God indeed foresees must, as a great, though shamefully neglected, writer observes *, of necessity happen; but the action itself is not necessarily influenced by the foreknowledge. A thing *may* happen, or it may *not* happen; it *must* happen, or not happen; and in either case God must, from his infinite perfections, foresee it. Necessity, in reality, is an *accident*, and has nothing whatever to do with simple prescience. Though God foresees that an agent will perform a certain action, he does not, by that foreknowledge, which is manifestly inoperative, impose the necessity of the action. Free-will excludes all necessity; and prescience merely foresees the direction which the free-agency will take. If what God foresees *must* happen, there is undoubtedly a necessity; but that necessity is not, so far as concerns the relation of cause and effect, *antecedent*, but *subsequent*, to the action. Hence the sinner will not commit a crime *because* God foresees it; but God foresees it *because* the sinner will commit it. In short, we may conclude, that if prescience and necessity were the same thing, God himself could not be a free agent; since He must foresee his own work, and consequently must, if the hypothesis were true, work by necessity. — Of this clear distinction Alfred was ignorant: he could not comprehend the reasoning either of Aristotle or of Boethius: he could not see how the gold could be discovered unless God had ordained one man to hide it, another man to plough and thereby find it: he could not understand

* S. Anselmi, Opera, tom. iii. p. 179, &c. (De Concordiâ Præscientiæ et Prædestinationis, necnon Gratiæ Dei cum Libero Arbitrio).

Your Lockes and Hutchinsons, your Priestleys and Copplestones, sink into insignificance when compared with this truly great man.

We really have not patience with writers who, after all that has been written on the subject of Predestination and Prescience, still choose to confound them. The distinction between them is shown as clearly by Boethius as it is by St. Anselm.

how the prescience could exist without the necessity; how the hider and the finder could be free agents, if God foresaw that the one would hide and the other find. His Saxon mind was too clouded for the perception of so clear a truth. To show that in these remarks we do not treat him with the least injustice, — that he did not at all comprehend the reasoning of his author, — we will exhibit first the *substance* of that reasoning (it is too diffuse to be literally translated), referring, as proof of our fidelity, to the work itself; and secondly, Alfred's conception of the same subject.*

The object of Boethius is evidently to reconcile the prescience of God with the contingency of human actions. To enable Philosophy to refute the common, and we may add almost universal, errors of mankind on this subject, he begins by stating the popular conceptions respecting it. — God's foreknowledge appears absolutely inconsistent with the free-will of men: for if He foresees every thing, and cannot be deceived in the foreknowledge, then what He foresees must of necessity happen: and if from all eternity He has this foreknowledge, then as the motives no less than the actions of men are thus necessitated, there can be no such thing as freedom of choice. For if any event could happen otherwise than as God foresees it, his prescience would not be sure and unerring, — an impious disparagement of his attributes. He (Boethius, as opposed to Philosophy) is aware that solution of this difficult problem, viz. the Divine prescience with human free-agency, has been attempted by the suggestion that the events of this life do not happen because they have been foreseen; but, because they are to happen, they must of necessity be foreseen by infinite wisdom. This distinction he cannot understand; since the necessity, though it has changed sides, still exists.† For allowing it to be true that events are foreseen because they will happen, and that they do not

* Boethius, De Consolatione, lib. v. Alfred, Saxon version, chap. xl. and xli.

† We have omitted an illustration, which we do not think very pertinent.

happen because they are foreseen, still, as whatever will happen *must* be foreseen, and as whatever is foreseen *must* take place, there is the same inevitable conclusion. If God could err in this foreknowledge; if the event which He foresees could take place in any other manner than *as* He foresees it; if, in short, there should be any, even the slightest, modification between the event as foreseen in the Divine mind, and the actual character of that event when it does transpire; then the prescience of God would be defective: it would want the first of all requisites to constitute truth, viz. the exact conformity of the prescient conception with the real nature of the thing.* For if a person conceives a thing to be different from what it really is, that conception is not *knowledge;* it is merely a *false opinion* or *idea,* and is far remote from the nature of truth. As what we *do know* (viz. what we conceive rightly) is free from all uncertainty, so what knowledge comprehends cannot be otherwise than *as* it is comprehended; for such knowledge cannot err. If any event may, or may not, happen, there can be no such thing as prescience concerning it; for if it be uncertain, how can it be foreseen? If such be prescience, it is of a strange kind, and may fitly be compared with the ridiculous divination of Tiresias:

> "O Laertiade! quidquam dicam *aut erit, aut non,*
> Divinare etenim magnus mihi donat Apollo." †

If this were the case, how could the prescience of God be said to be superior to the opinion of mortals, if, like them, he judges with uncertainty in regard to things that may or may not suffer? But if there can be no uncertainty in the knowledge of Him who is the source of all certainty, the arrival of all things which He fore-

* The well known definition of Aristotle: — "Truth is the exact conformity of human conceptions with the nature of the things conceived."

† Horatii Sat. lib. ii. Sat. 5. Which Francis has thus inadequately rendered: —

> "O son of Great Laertes! every thing
> Shall come to pass, in verses, as I sing:
> For Phœbus, monarch of the tuneful Nine,
> Informs my soul, and gives me to divine."

knows must be fixed and inevitable. It therefore follows, that there be no freedom either in the designs or the actions of men; because the Divine mind, possessing as it does an infallible prescience, binds together such designs and such actions with the conduct of men. Yet, if such be the case, rewards for the good and punishments for the bad would be alike unjust; there could be no such thing as virtue or vice in reference to human conduct; and we should be driven to the blasphemous inference, that evil must be ascribed to God alone, — to that Being who is the source of all virtue and goodness! Dreadful the consequences from such a doctrine! Useless alike would be prayer and hope: for why pray, why hope, if our fate in this world and the next be inevitably decreed by Heaven?*

Such is the substance of the objections which Boethius, with the view of exposing the common notions of his times on this momentous question, has suggested: let us now see in what manner he makes Philosophy refute them.

Philosophy commences her reply by observing that this is the *old* objection, so ably discussed by Cicero, in his book of Divination. The reason of it is founded in the erroneous notion generally held of the Divine prescience. The proposition which she establishes is this, — That simple prescience is no obstruction to free-agency, since it is not the necessitating cause of future events. The mischief is, that we seldom conceive the idea of prescience without the adjunct of power, which has nothing whatever in common with that attribute. Accustomed to regard the compound proposition, — that the things which are foreseen must necessarily happen, — we do not consider that we suffer the judgment to be misled by the combination of knowledge with power; that we join the notion of necessity with that of foresight. Let us suppose there is no such thing as prescience: in this case the actions of the free agent would manifestly be exempt from the influence of

* Boethius, De Consolatione, lib. v. prosa 3.

necessity. Again, let us conceive the notion of simple prescience without power: is there any thing absurd in such a conception? May we not, with perfect reasonableness, imagine a being endowed with the property of prescience unaccompanied by the slightest influence over the events foreseen? Such have been all the prophets of the Old and of the New Testament; such even pagan sages have acknowledged to exist in all religions. It follows, therefore, that there is nothing at all contrary to reason in the hypothesis of foresight without necessitating influence; but rather that the simple existence of such a faculty is in strict conformity with the nature of things.—But we are willing to leave this vantage ground, and combat in a different position. Admitted, you may say, that prescience has no influence on future events, still it is a sign that they shall necessarily happen. But the sign is not the thing. Before this objection can be received, you must prove that there really exists a necessity in all human events. If there be no necessity, prescience cannot be the sign of that which does not exist.—But we will enter more deeply into the subject. With God there is no such relation as the future, none such as the past; because, from his Omnipresence, all things must of necessity be present to him. "He is in a state immovable, immutable, and eternally present to every thing: his knowledge soars above the progressions of time; it brings together past and future, however vast the interval between them, and in its infinite scope comprehends all things as actually existing." He who is circumscribed by no space, who is bound by no time, can have no succession of ideas, no progress in the order of his understanding; with Him, cause and consequence must be alike eternally present. As, therefore, He beholds the actual event of all things, from the earliest of his creations to those which will exist in the unfathomable depths of (to us) the eternity to come, how can He have foreknowledge? how can he influence future events by contemplating them as present? We, mortals, perceive many things

every instant passing around us: does this perception involve a necessitating influence? *

Readers the least conversant with this subject will, we believe, admit that Boethius has made it as clear as it is possible to be made; that he has no confusion of ideas, no misconception respecting it; and that he has exhibited an accuracy of illustration, a perspicuity of argument, not to be found in Cicero, in Aristotle, or any preceding writer.† Let us now see how Alfred has reasoned upon it.

The first inference that any reader will draw from the comparison is, that the king was writing in almost utter darkness as to his original; that he had scarcely a glimpse of the philosopher's reasoning. He scarcely adverts to the metaphysical character of the subject; but he dwells on its *moral* surface. After the commonplace observations—that if the doctrine of predestination were true, there would be neither merit nor demerit in human actions; that this doctrine is blasphemous, inasmuch as it makes God the author of evil; that it is inconsistent with the express declarations of Scripture, which promises rewards to the good, and denounces punishment to the wicked, he proceeds: —

"Well know I that God every thing foresees, both good and evil, before it happens; but I know not whether *all* that which he foresees and has ordained shall unchangeably happen.

"Then said he: It need not *all* happen unchangeably. But *some* of it shall happen unchangeably, that is, whatever shall be needful for us, and shall be his will. And some of it is so ordained that it is *not* needful, and it hurts us not if it happen, or if it do not happen. Think now within thyself whether thou hast resolved any thing so firmly that thou wilt never consent to change it, or that thou mayst not live without it. Consider, also, whether in any purpose thou art so

* Boethius, De Consolatione, lib. v. prosæ 4, 5, 6.

† We might add, or in any subsequent writer, St. Anselm, and two or three more who lived within a century of him, excepted.

foolish as not to care whether it happen or do not happen. Many is the thing which God knows before it may happen, and which he also knows will hurt his creatures if it do happen. He does not know it because he wills it shall happen, but because he wishes to take care that it shall *not* happen. Thus a good pilot foresees a great storm of wind before it comes, and folds the sail, and awhile lowers his mast, and withstands the tempest."*

If this paragraph has any meaning at all (which is doubtful) it is this, — that God reserves to himself the liberty of changing his own purposes according to contingent circumstances; that he unchangeably wills those things only which may be for our good; and that he changes the course of events which he had himself foreseen and even appointed, whenever he perceives that they would be hurtful to us. Thus he may foresee that if a wicked man persist in wickedness, the tempest of his displeasure shall overtake him; but if the sinner forsake the ways of evil, then the chastisement which was predestined shall be averted! No other signification can be legitimately applied to the words. They ascribe to the celestial the imperfections inseparable from earthly sovereigns; they represent Him as resolving to await the course of events, and to decide accordingly! They do not even attempt to explain the connection between prescience and necessity. We repeat,—and we are sure the reader will join us in the assertion, — that unless Alfred purposely evaded the subject, as too abstruse for his apprehension, he did not understand his philosophic original. Yet Mr. Turner asserts that "his sound and practical understanding has fixed itself on the true solution of this difficult question;" that he "has hit upon the real wisdom of opinion concerning it, which both theologians and metaphysicians have failed to attain. He could not have left a more impressive instance of the penetrating sagacity of his clear and honest mind. Boetius was ad-

* Alfred's Boethius, chap. 41. § 3.

vancing to the point, but missed it; for he seems to have thought, like most, that whatever was foreseen must occur." If the Roman philosopher was unintelligible to the Saxon king, assuredly he is equally so to the historian.*

From the preceding observation, it will be evident to the reader that we do not greatly admire the manner in which Boethius was "done into Saxon" by Alfred. Nor do we feel the admiration that some have professed for his other translations. Thus, in regard to his Saxon version of the venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the Britons and Saxons, we have nothing to say, except that though it is not so periphrastic as the version of Boethius, it yet exhibits liberties which ought not to have been taken with the subject. Frequent passages, sometimes whole chapters, are condensed or omitted, while at others additions are made to the original. They are, however, too slight to interest the attention.†

The translation (if so it may be called) of Orosius‡ exhibits much greater freedoms, than that of Bede. There are greater omissions, more frequent abbreviations, more new paragraphs; and the manner of the whole is more periphrastic. As, however, we have dwelt so much on his manner in the notice of Boethius, we shall here advert to the additions only that illustrate his own geographical information. That such information was considerable, though frequently erroneous, is evident from many passages, especially from his mention of the Germanic tribes in the ninth century. His nomenclature indeed is sometimes strange to modern eyes. In the *Swaefas*, the *Baegthware*, the *Beme*, the *Sysyle*, the *Maroaro*, we should have some difficulty in recognising the Swabians, the Bavarians, the Bohemians, the Silesians, and the Moravians; while *Donna*, *Aelfe*, *Regnes-burh*,

* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 67, &c.

† See with the Latin original and the Saxon version in Smith's Bede, Cantab. 1722. This edition of the Saxon version is much superior to the one published by Wheloe; but it might be much improved.

‡ Published by Daines Barrington in 1773.

Carendre, Pulgara, Çreca, Wisleland, seem rather obscure indications of the Danube, the Elbe, Ratisbon, Carinthia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Little Poland. What, however, is of more consequence, the location of all these people is fixed with an approximation to accuracy; and whenever a map of Germany during that period is constructed, recourse must be had to this description of Alfred.—But far more interesting, and far more important than this geographical attempt, is the relation of two voyages undertaken, one towards the North Pole, the other towards the Baltic,—both at the command of this enterprising monarch. In both cases the relation was drawn up by the royal hand; but though exceedingly curious in itself, we cannot interrupt the narrative by inserting it. Here we are satisfied with indicating the proofs of the enterprising spirit of this most extraordinary sovereign. His ardour indeed in the pursuit of geographical knowledge was inexhaustible. Not satisfied with the two expensive voyages of discovery to which we have alluded, he sent an ecclesiastic named Swithelm into India, with gifts to the shrine of St. Thomas. Though the acquittance of a vow was the original cause of this embassy, there can be no doubt that the most powerful inducement was the information which might be derived from an intelligent traveller. But that information is lost: whether, like the northern voyages, it was committed to writing by Alfred, can never be known. All we can learn is, that the ecclesiastic returned from his perilous journey; that he brought back many curiosities, including gems and perfumes; and that, in recompense of his adventurous spirit, he was raised to the see of Sherburne.*

Of the other literary efforts of Alfred we have little information that can be entitled to implicit credit, since many have been ascribed to him of which he never

* Saxon Chronicle, p 86. Henricus Hunting. p. 350. Wilhelm Malmesbur. De Gestis, p 44. The last author says that some of the gems were to be seen in existence. De Pont. 248. See also Langebek, Rerum Daniscarum Scriptores, tom. ii. p. 106, &c.; and the notes of Mr. Forster to Barrington's Orosius.

dreamed. It is indeed certain that they were numerous: for the Saxon life of St. Neot affirms that he wrote "many books;" but the number, as Ethelbald observes, was unknown. He may or may not have translated select passages from the meditations of St. Augustine, and from the Psalter; but certainly he did not, as the Historia Elyensis assures us, render the whole of the Bible into Saxon, nor, as Boston of Bury qualifies it, "nearly all the Testament." Equal uncertainty hangs over his reputed translation of the whole, or even a portion, of Esop's Fables. The probability is that many of the words ascribed to him were undertaken at his command. This we know to have been the case in regard to the Dialogues of Pope Gregory, which were translated by bishop Werefrith.*

Our opinion of Alfred as a literary man may be inferred from the preceding strictures. The truth is, he has been more overrated in this respect than any man of ancient or of modern times. He began too late, and his royal duties were too numerous, to permit him, whatever might be his endeavour, to make much proficiency in the general literature of the age. His information was exceedingly crude and indigested; he did not, and from circumstances could not, classify it in his mind, and thereby raise it to the dignity of knowledge. There is little vigour in his manner; none whatever in his conceptions. In imitating the metres Boethius, he made more attempts at poetry; but if they are compared with the original, they will be found lamentably deficient alike in fancy and taste. Even Mr. Turner allows that in comparison with the fragments of Cedmon and the odes in the Saxon Chronicle, his versification "has less strength and fulness of rhythm;" which means that it has none whatever. The reader who is curious on the subject, and who has patience enough to sustain an exercise of unexampled

* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii.

dulness, may refer for specimens to the historian we have quoted.*

But if we are compelled thus slightly to value the 883
literary attainments of Alfred, it is impossible to praise to
him too highly as a patron of learning. We have 890.
already seen how diligently he sought for scholars both in his own kingdom and on the continent, and how regally he rewarded them. And so anxious was he that the noble youths should be imbued with all the learning of the times, that he had many of them educated in his own palace, and under his own eye; and he loved them, we are told, as much as if they had been his own.† His love, however, must have been confined chiefly to those who benefited by the instructions of the tutors he had provided for them; for like Charlemagne, whom he was fond of imitating, he had his Schola Palatii, —the most efficient of all his devices for the mental and moral improvement of his country. With the same wise purpose he founded monasteries and schools, over which he placed superiors likely to encourage the liberal no less than the religious studies. 1. For John the monk, "the old Saxon," whom about the same time as Grimbald he brought over from the continent, and who is believed to have been educated and professed in the monastery of Corbey in Westphalia, he founded the monastic establishment of Ethelingey, and made this John the first abbot. Ethelingey was endeared to Alfred: it had afforded a safe retreat from the fortunes alike of the monarchy and of himself; but the chief motive to the erection was a vow—probably made in the period of his adversity ‡—that he would one day show his gratitude to heaven by such an undertaking. To fill it with inmates was no easy labour. His noble and

* Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 101, &c.

† "Filios quoque eorum, (comitum, nobilium, familiarium) qui in regali familiâ nutriebantur, non minus propriis diligens, omnibus bonis moribus instituere, et litteris imbuere, die noctuque inter cætera non desinebat." —*Asser*, p. 44.

‡ "De voto, et proposito excellentissimæ meditationis suæ, quem semper inter prospera et adversa sua, nullo modo prætermittere poterat." Id. p. 60.

free subjects, says Asser, were averse from the monastic life; slaves were not admissible into it; and children were too young to assume the obligation. His only resource, therefore, was to procure priests and deacons (all monks) from "parts beyond sea," especially from Gaul; and to them, as well as to the abbot, he confided the education of the children. It appears, however, that the Saxon mind was, at this period, hostile to his monastic plans*; for most of their children, who were afterwards professed, were foreigners also. (Asser assures us that he saw a pagan youth there in the monastic habit, and adds, that this was not the last instance of the kind.) The fate of the abbots was tragical. Two Gallic ecclesiastics, says the biographer of the king, burned with concealed dislike to their abbot; and, like Judas, at the devil's instigation, they resolved to ruin him. But they were worse than Judas; for the death of the body would not satisfy them; they must also ruin the good man's reputation. They instructed two of the French boys, their disciples, with the details of the dark conspiracy. John was accustomed, when all were buried in sleep, to enter the church of the monastery alone, and to pray before the altar. The two boys, well armed, were privily introduced into the sacred edifice, were there concealed, and were engaged not only to murder the abbot at his devotions, but afterwards to drag his corpse from the place, to leave it before the house of a certain prostitute, and to swear that he had been killed in the act of fornication. At midnight the victim entered, went before the altar, and was immediately assailed. As he heard their footsteps behind him, he arose, turned round, shouted, and struggled with them in the darkness: he had no suspicion that they were assassins; but in the credulity of the age believed them to be demons, sent or permitted to annoy him. Alarmed by his cries, his monks flew to his aid: they

* "Quia per multa retroacta annorum auricula monasticæ vitii desiderium ob illâ totâ gente, necnon a multis aliis gentibus, funditus deierat." Id. p. 61.

found him alone, mortally wounded, and bore him to his own apartment, where he soon expired. The conspirators were discovered, were fettered, tried, and executed by order of the king.—2. Another conventual establishment was erected for ladies only near Shaftesbury, and over it was placed Ethelgiva, daughter of Alfred. Many noble women, says Asser, united with her in the monastic observances, and served God in the same place. There too, beyond all doubt, was a school for the education of Saxon young ladies in literature no less than in religion. The royal abbess died five years before her father, viz. in 896; and was venerated as a saint in the Saxon church.*

Of Grimbald, who like the abbot of Ethelingey has been sainted, our notices are much less scarce. It is certain that a life of him was written by that great hagiologic biographer, Joscelin of Canterbury; but it is no where to be found. If, however, any reliance were to be placed on two editions of Asser,—Camden's, and the subsequent one of Wise,—this learned ecclesiastic, whom, as we have before related, Fulco, archbishop of Rheims, granted to the prayers of Alfred, was placed over the university of Oxford. The substance of the relation is, that in 886 there was a great quarrel at Oxford between Grimbald and the learned men he had brought with him on the one part, and the old teachers whom he found there on the other; that the latter refused to observe the statutes which he had introduced; that the dissension continued three years, and arose to such a pitch that Alfred himself hastened to appease it; and that he patiently heard the partisans on both sides. The old teachers contended that long before Grimbald was born, letters flourished at the college; that though when the French doctor intro-

* Asserius Menevensis, De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi, ubi supra. Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, de Regibus, (in Regno Aelfredi). Mabillon, Venerabilis Johannis Abbatis Elegium Historicum (in Actis SS. Ord. S. Ben. sæc. iv. pars 2. p. 506.) Alfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglo-Saxon. tom. iii. A.D. 883. The monastery of Ethelingey does not appear to have been constructed until 887; but the abbot John must have come into England four years preceding. The monks of St. Maur, Histoire Littéraire de la France, tom. v. Fleury Histoire Ecclésiastique, tom. viii. Lingard, Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church, passim.

duced his novelties, scholars were fewer than in ancient times, the cause was the devastations of the pagans; that the statutes and discipline of the place had been approved, by eminent men in the church of God, — by Gildas, Melkin, Nennius, Kentigern, and others who were educated there; that St. Germanus himself was, during his mission, on a visit to Oxford, where he remained half a year; and that he warmly approved the constitution of the schools. The king, it is added, strongly exhorted the rival disputants to peace; and left in the hope that his exhortations would be effectual; but that Grimbald, indignant at the opposition to his reforms, abruptly abandoned the place, and repaired to the monastery of Winchester, which had been recently founded by Alfred, and in which he passed the remnant of his days.*

886. If this relation were authentic, it would, as the reader has already perceived, prove that Oxford is of far greater antiquity than is generally allowed, and would give her, in this respect, no slight advantage over her rival, Cambridge. But the authenticity has been disputed, and with justice. The passage was not in the very ancient MS. published by archbishop Parker in 1574; it was not in another ancient one†, supposed to have been transcribed about a century after Alfred's death; in fact, it is not to be found in any MS. whatever. It is, indeed, in Camden's Asser (1603), taken from a MS. supposed to be of the fourteenth century; but even that MS. is no longer to be found; it has never been seen since the book was printed; and if Usher be correct, it was never seen even by Camden himself, who professed to have derived the passage from another person. There is, indeed, no other evidence than *hearsay* for the existence of the MS. in which that passage was contained. As there was a hot contention for antiquity between the two universities ten years before Parker published his edition, an important question here arises:—Did

* Asserius, De Rebus Gestis, p. 52.
† Cotton MSS. Otho A. 12. since burnt.

Parker, who was a Cambridge man, omit the celebrated passage? or did Camden, whose Alma Mater was Oxford, invent it? In this respect Parker is above suspicion; and Camden's fidelity is unquestionable. It does not, however, follow that the latter was not misled by some one of less honesty than himself. Assuredly there is no *historic* evidence in favour of the clause. If such a dispute really occurred at Oxford, would all mention of it have been omitted by the historians who, in other respects, so minutely followed Asser,—by Ethelwerd, Ingulf, Marianus Scotus, Florence of Worcester, William of Malmesbury, and others? The fact that not a syllable of the dispute in question is to be found in any one of these writers, coupled with the non-existence of the passage in every MS. of Asser now extant, affords, we think, reasonable presumption that no such passage was ever written by that abbot; and that it is an interpolation of some modern partisan. This presumption is greatly strengthened by internal evidence. 1. If Oxford was so important a seat of learning as to attract the visit of St. Germanus, and to have been the nursery of Gildas, Nennius, and others, it must, of necessity, have been a *British* foundation. But if so, would the Saxons have spared it,—for spared it they must had either of those men been educated there? Nennius, at least, flourished in the height of the Saxon power,—supposing even that he died in the *seventh*, though there is greater probability for inferring that he was living in the *ninth* century. 2. If Oxford, as a seat of learning, were really in existence in the time of Germanus, Gildas, Nennius, and Kentigern, why has Bede observed so deep a silence respecting it? That venerable historian dwells with great pleasure on the excellent school at Canterbury, founded by St. Augustine, and improved by archbishop Theodore; and expressly declares that previously there was no learning in England; that for it we were wholly indebted to the Roman missionaries. Had the Oxford foundation existed in his time (and the passage in dispute

distinctly implies that there had been no suspension of instruction from the days of St. Germanus to those of Alfred), or immediately prior to his time, assuredly it would have been mentioned by an historian often so minute in recording the events of the period, and always fond of dwelling on the interests of learning. Whoever will read his work with attention, and without bias, will be of opinion that the school of Canterbury was for some time the only one in Saxon England; and that the one subsequently founded in East Anglia, which existed but for a short time, was the second. Malmesbury appears to have had the third, unless York can dispute the palm of antiquity. 3. In no writer of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries do we find the slightest allusion to Oxford. Had St. Kentigern, for instance, been, as the apocryphal clause affirms, educated there, we should certainly have had some intimation of the circumstance by his biographer. But, in direct opposition to this relation, we are expressly informed that he went to Rome for the learning which his own country could not afford.—From these facts and this reasoning, we are compelled to infer that the existence of Oxford even in the ninth century is a fiction; that Alfred, consequently, neither founded nor enlarged it; and thus another of the glories with which his name has been associated must be snatched from him. But his fame as a patron of literature is great enough to sustain this diminution: what he actually did for the improvement of Saxon intellect, is sufficient to stamp him in this respect as the greatest sovereign England has ever had.*

Some other particulars of this monarch have been collected by modern industry. 1. In the measurement of time, as hour-glasses were not yet introduced, he had

* Asserius Menevensis, ubi supra. Usserius, De Primordiis, p. 184. Antony Wood, Historia et Antiquitates Oxoniensis, p. 9.; Spelman, Life of Alfred, book 3. See also the Latin translation by Walker, with notes. Wise, Apologia Asserii Camdeniani, p 133, &c. Mabillon, Acta SS. Ord. S. Benedicti (Præfatio ad Sæc. iv. pars 1. § 8., necnon Sæc. v. p. 1. De S. Grimbaldo.

at first some difficulty. Every day being divided by him into periods for the successive discharge of his royal, literary, and devotional duties, he was anxious to estimate the progress of time. The only standard which his ingenuity could derive for this purpose was that of wax candles. He found that if the flame were not agitated by the wind, a candle of twelve pennyweights, twelve inches long, would burn four hours; and six of them a day and a night. But when there was a wind, he was sure to be deceived in his calculation; and he at length adopted the expedient of enclosing the burning candles in lamps of white horn, scraped so thin as to be transparent. 2. Many of these hours were passed in devotion. We have already seen that he frequently arose before daybreak to pray in solitary places, which had been consecrated by eminent piety. Some of his effusions are still extant; not indeed as respects compositions, but interspersed through his version of Boetius; and they breathe a fervour which must deeply surprise us in a *king*. 3. He made an exact division of his revenues, a great portion of which he applied to the purposes of religion, of learning, and of almsgiving. In fact, he placed no value on money; and that he was sometimes profuse in its disposal, may be inferred from the instance of Asser. For this extravagance he must be censured; and sometimes, we suspect, for the manner in which he replenished his coffers. If any faith is to be reposed in the statements of writers immediately subsequent, he ventured to commit a crime so common that probably his conscience did not smite him for it — to keep bishoprics vacant as long as he could, and thereby to enjoy their revenues.*

From the preceding relation, derived almost exclusively from contemporary authorities, the character of this monarch may be easily understood. Great and good as he was, he has been prodigiously overrated. That, both as a man and a sovereign, he had many grievous defects until affliction chastened him, can no

* Asserius Menevensis—Saxon Chronicle—Ingulf—Malmesbury, passim.

longer be disputed. That he did not introduce into the administration of justice, and the internal economy of his kingdom, many of the improvements formerly ascribed to him, is equally certain. That his literary attainments do not merit the praises which have hitherto been passed on them, is, we think, no less indubitable. But though national partiality has greatly magnified his fame, he must ever be dear to Englishmen. His activity mental and bodily, notwithstanding the pressure of constant disease, is unexampled in all history. His anxiety for the welfare of his people raises him to the level of the best rulers the world has yet seen. His enlightened views, his enterprising spirit, stamp him truly great. His affability won him the favour, his generosity the love, of his subjects. His piety might even have procured him the honours of canonisation. On the whole, making all due allowance for the extravagant admiration with which he has been regarded by posterity, we may say, with the distinguished authors of the *Biographie Universelle*,—"As a man and a king, he is one of those who have done most honour to humanity."

CHAUCER.

ENGLAND. 1328—1400.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, to whom English poetry is under the highest obligations, was born in London, in the year 1328, being the second of Edward III. Of his family little or nothing has been recorded; but there is some reason to conclude that the conjecture of Speght, one of his early editors, as to the father of our poet being respectably engaged in mercantile business, may not be unfounded. It would appear, indeed, from his "Testament of Love," where he speaks of his native city in the most endearing terms, and designates it as the place where he was "forth growen*," that not only did he receive his first nurture and education there, but that the latter was such as to enable him to reflect upon it with gratitude and delight. That it was on a liberal scale for the period, may be inferred from the circumstance of his being destined by his parents to complete his studies at Cambridge. Thither, it is probable, he was sent at an early age; for in his "Court of Love," written when he was but eighteen, he describes himself as "Philogenet, of Cambridge, clerk."

Of the rapid progress which he made in the literature of his age, at this seat of the muses, we have ample evidence in the structure of his writings; and how early he appeared as the polisher and improver of his native language, the poem just alluded to, and which was composed in the year 1346, is a striking instance. Previous, indeed, to the composition of this poem the northern French had been the language of literature; and, with the exception of metrical romances, scarcely any thing

* Book i. sect. 5.

had been written in English in the form of poetry, but Layamon's translation of Wace, the Chronicles of Robert of Gloucester and Robert Manning, and the Alexander of Adam Davie, productions, from their barbarity of style and total want of harmony, little calculated to excite a spirit of emulation. Fortunately for our bard, Edward III. had, from political motives, begun to discourage the exclusive use of the French tongue, especially in the departments of law and education; and it speaks highly in favour of the talents of Chaucer, that, at the early age of eighteen, he had the sagacity to discover a new road to fame in the cultivation of his native language, and to enter on it with a degree of success almost unparalleled.

The most striking feature, indeed, in the "Court of Love," is the singular felicity of its diction and versification; the former being remarkable for its ease and perspicuity, and the latter not only for the general harmony of its structure, but for the peculiar merit, it is believed, of introducing into English metre the very first specimens of the ten-syllable verse, and of the seven-line stanza. In every other respect, if we set aside a few traits of humour and character, worthy of the maturer age of the author, it must be considered as betraying the juvenile period at which it was written, being extremely deficient both in plot and incident; and built, moreover, on one of the most fantastic usages of chivalry prevalent in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, namely, the institution of courts or parliaments of love, where questions of gallantry were discussed with all the solemnity and parade of legal judicature.

How long Chaucer remained at Cambridge, and whether on leaving it he removed to Oxford, are circumstances which cannot now be satisfactorily ascertained. It was not uncommon for scholars at this period to avail themselves of education at both universities; and Wood has recorded a tradition, that at Oxford our poet was the pupil of Wickliffe, then warden of Canterbury college.*

* Annals, vol. i. book i. p. 484.

If we may further give credit to the authority of Leland, there is reason to conclude that, on leaving Oxford, where, according to this historian, he had made a rapid progress in dialectics, rhetoric, poetry, philosophy, mathematics, and theology *, he bent his steps to the continent, with the view of completing his studies at Paris, and of acquiring an accurate knowledge of the French language, an object in which we know he fully succeeded. What mode of life he adopted on first revisiting his native country is not positively ascertained; but it is not improbable, from an anecdote related by Speght, that he entered on the study of the law; for he tells us that a Mr. Buckley had seen a record of the Inner Temple which stated, that Geoffrey Chaucer was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet-street; and Leland has also mentioned, that he was in the habit of attending the law colleges, though he is evidently in an error with regard to the date of this attendance.

It is to this period of his life that we may with the greatest plausibility ascribe one of the longest, and, if we except the Canterbury Tales, one of the best and most elaborate of his productions, the poem of "Troilus and Creseide." Lydgate has informed us, that it was the product of his "youth †;" and it is inscribed, towards its close ‡, to two of his earliest friends, the "moral Gower," and the "philosophical Strode;" the latter, there is reason to believe, his fellow student at Oxford, and the former at the Inner Temple. Another circumstance which strongly points to the early era of its composition is, its being devoid of any allusion to the connections which he subsequently, and indeed soon after, formed in high life.

"Troilus and Creseide," though intended to be sung to the harp, is, as Warton has observed §, almost as long as the Æneid, and occupies, notwithstanding its

* Scriptores Britannici, cap. clv.
† Fall of Princes, Prologue, stanza xii.
‡ Book v. ver. 1855, 1856. Urry's edition.
§ History of English Poetry, vol. i. p. 368.

author has termed it "a little tragedie," not less than five books, and nearly eight thousand lines. It is, however, upon the confession of Chaucer himself, scarcely any thing more than a very free translation from a Latin poem, written by a person whom he terms "Myne Auctor Lollius," and whom he has again mentioned in his "House of Fame" among the writers of the Tale of Troy, and classed with Homer, Dares, Dictys, Guido, and Geoffrey of Monmouth.* Though the original, therefore, of Lollius be lost, there is no sufficient foundation for concluding, with Mr. Tyrwhitt, that this personage had no existence but in the imagination of Chaucer; on the contrary, there is some reason to suppose that the work of Lollius was translated both into the Greek and Lombard tongues, and formed the basis of the Filostrato of Boccaccio. †

The poem of "Troilus and Creseide," when considered in relation to the era in which it was produced, is a work of singular excellence: it attracted to a wide extent the admiration of the poet's contemporaries, and laid, in fact, the basis of his fame and fortune. The style is clear and simple; the versification, which in structure is that of the "Court of Love," is fluent and melodious; and the sentiments such as in general evince an intimate acquaintance with the genuine emotions of the human heart. It has no pretensions, either in form or machinery, to the title of an epic poem; but it paints the vicissitudes of love, its joys and agonies, with great fidelity to nature, and often with exquisite pathos and simplicity. Its faults, however, which are those of its age, are neither few nor trifling; it is beyond measure prolix; curiosity is not sufficiently awakened by its incidents; its language is occasionally coarse and indecorous; and its catastrophe is not only painful but disgusting. Notwithstanding these demerits, it is, on the whole, a production which reflects high honour both on the head and heart of its author; and we may further add, as

* House of Fame, book iii. ver. 374. 382.

† Warton, vol. i. p. 384.

presumable indications of its worth, that it has been praised by Sidney, and imitated by Shakspeare.

The popularity which Chaucer acquired by this work, and by his translation of Boethius de Consolatione Philosophiæ, the favourite classic of that age, which he executed, it is thought, a few years subsequent to his Tröilus, and which exhibited his talents for prose composition in a very pleasing light, would seem to have early attracted the notice of Edward III., who wished to be esteemed the patron of learning as well as of arms. It is probable, indeed, that about the year 1358 or 1359 he was settled near the person of the monarch, at the palace of Woodstock, in a small house adjacent to the park gate, and had been for some time previous the friend and companion of his third son, John of Gaunt, then earl of Richmond, but afterwards duke of Lancaster; inferences which appear to be legitimately drawn from a consideration of the next three poems which Chaucer produced, entitled "The Parliament of Birds," "The Complaint of the Black Knight," and "The Dream." Of these, the first is an allegorical poem, celebrating the earl's attachment for, and courtship of, the princess Blanche, youngest daughter of Henry duke of Lancaster. That it was written previous to their marriage, which was solemnised on the 19th of May, 1359, is evident from the whole purport of the allegory, and from the circumstance of the poet mentioning the lady as deferring the completion of her lover's wishes for a twelvemonth. The scene is laid towards the opening of the poem, in "a parke ywalled with grene stone," a description satisfactorily fixing the locality at Woodstock, which is allowed to be the first enclosure of the park kind which took place in England. The "Parliament of Birds," which is written in the same metre with its two predecessors, displays a considerable share of fancy, but is very unequal in execution, and the allegory is often trite and unnatural.

To this, which may be termed his first court poem, succeeded "The Complaint of the Black Knight," a

poem which tradition has recorded * to have been written for John of Gaunt on the occasion of his falling under the displeasure of his mistress, in consequence of some false aspersions which had reached her ear, and to which she had too hastily given credit. Nothing can exceed the beauty and luxuriancy of the descriptive parts of this poem, composed likewise in the stanza of seven lines, and evidently painting the scenery of Woodstock, as it mentions the gate, the park, and the surrounding wall, in terms similar to those in the "Parliament of Birds." †

It would appear, however, that the delusion which had given birth to the resentment of the lady Blanche was soon dissipated; for the following year our poet produced what he denominates his "Dream," an epithalamium, in fact, on the nuptials of his patron John of Gaunt, and which, from the exordium, seems to have been composed towards the close of the very month in which the ceremony took place at Reading in Berkshire. It points out more particularly than the prior poem his residence at Woodstock; for he tells us that his dream occurred to him as he lay

> Within a *lodge* out of the way,
> Beside a *well* in a forest,

evidently descriptive of the style and locality of his abode, and of one of the peculiar features of Woodstock Park. This vision, which, though singularly wild, is yet pleasing, is written in the octo-syllabic measure, and is more especially interesting as introducing us to the lady whom he afterwards married, and whom he paints in the most glowing and affectionate terms.

Indeed, from the two poems just considered, it may naturally be inferred that their author was treated with the utmost confidence and friendship by John of Gaunt and his consort; their kindness, in short, was unremitting, and to them he was eventually indebted not only

* Vide Life prefixed to Urry's edition, and Tyrwhitt's Preface, and Appendix C, note *e*.
Vide v. 38.

for much of his subsequent prosperity, but for his domestic happiness. In the service of the lady Blanche resided Catharine Rouet, the daughter of sir Payne Pycard de Rouet, a native of Hainault, and Guion king at arms for that province. This lady, who ultimately became duchess of Lancaster, had a younger sister, named Philippa, who was maid of honour to the queen, and much beloved by the earl and his countess. She is supposed to be described as the object of the poet's affection in his "Dream;" and, though the intimacy, for reasons hereafter to be mentioned, did not for some years terminate in marriage, it met with the approbation and encouragement of his noble patrons, and contributed not a little to his advancement.

In the autumn of this year, 1359, Chaucer was induced to accompany the earl of Richmond to France, as his friend, in a military capacity, in the army of Edward III. This circumstance of the poet's life we learn from his own deposition, made in October, 1386, as a witness in a cause of arms relative to a fact which had occurred in France between sir Richard le Scrope and sir Robert Grosvenor; and in this document he states himself to have "borne arms twenty-seven years." The peace of Bretigni, however, which in the following year terminated this expedition, the greatest that had ever left the shores of England, also closed the active military career of Chaucer; for it does not appear that he joined any subsequent campaign. Indeed the disposition of our poet, singularly mild and gentle, ill accorded with the pursuit of martial glory; yet in an age of warlike enterprise, and as the frequent companion of chieftains and heroes, it was a recommendation to have once, at least, discharged the duties of a soldier; and it afforded him at the same time an opportunity of witnessing scenes and modes of life to which he had otherwise been a stranger, — a circumstance of the first moment to a poet.

An event, not a little influential over the fortunes o Chaucer, took place about this period; for early in 1361,

John of Gaunt, now in his twenty-second year, succeeded his father-in-law as duke of Lancaster, — an accession of title which, together with the property of the duchess of Bavaria, who died about twelve months after, and had been co-heiress with the lady Blanche, rendered him the most wealthy and potent nobleman in the kingdom.

To the era of the poet's life, at which we are now arrived, when he was in his thirty-fourth or thirty-fifth year, has been ascribed, with considerable probability, the composition of one of his most celebrated productions, the "Romaunt of the Rose," a condensed translation of the "Roman de la Rose," a French poem, the joint production of William de Lorris and John de Meun, and written in the thirteenth century.

The original, which consists of more than 22,000 lines, is not only the most elaborate but the best poem which Europe had at that time produced, and amongst the French, indeed, remained unrivalled for more than two centuries. It is unfortunately ill adapted to the more correct taste of modern times, being in its fable and imagery nearly, if not altogether, allegorical. It figures, under the difficulties which attend the plucking of a beautiful rose, the obstacles, vicissitudes, and dangers which await the lover in the pursuit of the object of his desires. The great merit of the poem consists in its powers of description, and in a bold and masterly delineation of the passions, frailties, and propensities of human nature; but, as might be expected from its length and construction, it abounds in passages beyond measure tedious, tame, and puerile. It is also extremely unequal in its execution, a consequence of its having been originally the work of two writers of very different talents; and it is to be regretted that the best and most poetical portion of it, the contribution of William de Lorris, is also the smaller, extending to little more than 4000 lines. Happily Chaucer's translation, which occupies only 7699 verses in the octo-syllabic measure, includes all that de Lorris has written, whilst he has

retained but a part of John de Meun's continuation, and even in that part has made several judicious omissions. In fact, the version extends only to the 13,105th line of the French poem, being much less than two-thirds of the whole.

It is, however, a version which, both in point of language and metrical harmony, far surpasses the original; and the translator has enriched it, especially in the personifications, with many touches from his own fertile imagination. In giving this work, indeed, to his countrymen, Chaucer may be considered as having added much to the wealth and progress of his native language; for the French poem was, at that period, the great storehouse of poetical imagery, the most esteemed production in the realms of fancy: and to have drawn the lovers of elegant literature and splendid fiction from the study of a foreign tongue to dwell upon and develop the beauties of their own was an achievement of no small magnitude and utility.

So much of uncertainty pervades the early portion of our poet's life, that it is with no small pleasure we reach an event in it which is indisputably authenticated by an existing memorial. In the Fœdera of Rymer occurs a patent, dated the 20th of June, in the 41st of Edward III., and, consequently, in the year 1367, in virtue of which the monarch grants him for life, for services performed and to be performed, an annual pension of twenty marks.

It is remarkable that, in this document, Chaucer, who was now in his thirty-ninth year, is designated "Valettus noster," a title which has given rise, amongst his biographers, to various and discordant interpretations. Speght translates it *groom;* and the author of his life in Urry's edition, *gentleman of the privy chamber.* Mr. Tyrwhitt, with more probability, considers it as marking an intermediate station, which, as Mr. Ellis observes, "might be held even by persons of the highest rank; because the only science then in request among the nobility was that of etiquette, the knowledge of which

was acquired, together with the habits of chivalry, by passing in gradation through the several menial offices about the court." *

There cannot be much hesitation in inferring that the services meant to be remunerated in this deed, were those rendered by the grantee in his literary and poetical character. Both the king and the duke of Lancaster were avowed patrons of genius; and the latter, there is reason to surmise, had, at the age of eighteen, stimulated, no doubt, by the encouragement of his favourite bard, ventured to express his love for the object of his affections in the garb of the muses. † It is true, that when this pension was conferred John of Gaunt was in Spain, having taken a command at the head of the reinforcements sent from England to his brother the Black Prince, then, fatally for himself, engaged in the restoration of Peter king of Castile. But Edward III. was well aware that, besides consulting his own inclinations in augmenting the comforts and independence of the poet, he was, at the same time, gratifying the wishes of his son. Indeed, the amount, equal to about 240*l.* per annum of the present day, added to his paternal property, and the grant of the house at Woodstock, enabled him, whilst yet a single man, to live, if not in luxury, yet with elegance and hospitality.

In little more than two years after this pecuniary grant, two events occurred which, either immediately or remotely, influenced very materially the circumstances of our poet: these were, the deaths of Philippa queen of Edward III., and of Blanche duchess of Lancaster; the former expiring on the 15th of August, 1369, and the latter towards the close of the same year. That Chaucer should deeply sympathise in the sorrows and sufferings of John of Gaunt for the loss of his beloved consort might on every account be expected; and as he had written a poem on the courtship and another on the

* Specimens of the Early English Poets, vol. i. p. 200. Edition of 1801.
† Vide Book of the Duchess, v. 1175.

marriage of the duke, it could scarcely be supposed that he would omit to pour the mournful melody of verse over the premature bier of his amiable and accomplished duchess; over one, too, who had ever been his own constant patroness and protector. To this melancholy privation, then, we are indebted for "The Book of the Duchess;" a poem in octo-syllabic verse, which, though very unequal in point of execution, and containing much forced and irrelevant matter, yet may boast of some splendid, and several affecting, passages; and is further interesting as throwing additional light on the history of its author's life. It is evident, from the opening of the poem, that he was still unmarried, after a courtship of eight or ten years; a delay which may be accounted for from the supposition that the object of his affections, Philippa Pycard, whom we have seen was one of the maids of horour to the queen, might, from attachment to her royal mistress, be reluctant to quit her service. That she was, indeed, single on the demise of the queen is ascertained from a patent of Edward III., dated 20th January, 1370, in which a pension of 100 shillings is assigned to her under the name of Philippa Pycard, and under the title of *domicella;* and that the person thus designated subsequently became the wife of Chaucer appears from a patent of Richard II., where she is styled Philippa Chaucer, lately one of the maids of honour to queen Philippa, and as still receiving a pension for her former services in that capacity. We have reason, moreover, to conclude, from circumstances connected with the family of the poet, that his marriage, which still further endeared him to his patron John of Gaunt, took place in the year following the decease of her majesty.

Either shortly before, or soon after this connection, we find, from a record in Rymer, dated 20th June, 1370, that he received letters of protection from the king, commissioning him to visit the Continent on business relating to his service, but what this business was does not appear. It may be inferred, however, that in

its result it was successful; for about two years and a half subsequent to this mission, namely, in November, 1372, he was appointed one of three envoys to the republic of Genoa, for the purpose of selecting some situation on the coast of England where the Genoese might establish a regularly constituted factory. It speaks, indeed, much in favour of the esteem in which Chaucer was held by his contemporaries, when we find him associated in this transaction with men of rank or consequence; for his coadjutors in the embassy were sir James Pronan, vice-admiral of the Genoese auxiliaries, and John de Mari, a citizen of Genoa of high character and influence. Chaucer was at this time forty-four years of age, and is nominated in the patent by the title of *scutifer*, or esquire. But the most interesting part of this official excursion turns upon the very strong probability of his having had an interview with Petrarch during his residence in Italy; for he tells us in the Canterbury Tales, in the person of the clerk of Oxenford, whom it seems, from several minute circumstances, he wishes to identify with himself, that the pathetic story of Patient Grisildis, which he puts into the mouth of this personage, he had

> Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk, —
> Francis Petrark.

Now it is remarkable that this exquisitely told narrative was translated by Petrarch into Latin from the Italian of Boccaccio, according to his own statement *, in June, 1373, at a period when we may suppose Chaucer, having completed the business of his embassy, visited the north of Italy. We also know that Petrarch, now in his seventieth year, was at this very time resident at Padua, coincidences which almost irresistibly induce us to interpret the poet literally, and to picture to ourselves the venerable and immortal Italian reciting to his honoured and admiring guest his just completed version of a tale of woe almost unparalleled in its power of

* De Obedientia et Fide Uxoria. Opera, tom. i. sub finem.

subduing the human heart: it is a scene, indeed, which might furnish materials for the pencil of the most gifted artist.

As some acknowledgment for his services during this mission to Genoa, our poet received, on the 23d of April, 1374, the grant of a pitcher of wine, about a gallon in measure, to be delivered daily for his natural life by his majesty's chief butler; an allowance which, being for three years at least received in kind, and, as amounting to about four pipes annually, may give us some idea of the social habits of the man, and of the hospitality in which he was accustomed to live. Nor was this the only remuneration which fell to his share during the present year; for in the June following he was made comptroller of the customs of wool in the port of London; an office not a little lucrative, and the duties of which, though apparently somewhat foreign to his habits and studies, he is said to have discharged with the strictest integrity and punctuality.

The last four years, indeed, of the reign of Edward III. were productive to our bard of a singularly rapid succession both of employment and pecuniary emoluments; for, independent of the two grants just mentioned, he received from the munificence of the crown, in November, 1375, the wardship of Sir Edmond Staplegate's heir, a minor; a situation which added to his funds 104*l*., a sum, in modern money, equal to 1872*l*.; and, in the succeeding year, a grant of contraband wool that had been forfeited to the crown, to the amount of 71*l*. 4*s*. 6*d*., or, according to the estimate of the present day, to 1262*l*. To these advantages of a pecuniary kind were added, in 1377, the negotiation of some affairs of state of no little importance; for in Rymer are two patents, dated the 12th of February and the 28th of April of this year, granting him letters of protection from the king to pass the seas on some secret business connected with the views of government; whilst, on the authority of Froissart, we are told, that, in the intermediate period, he had been associated with sir Guichard

d'Angle and sir Richard Sturry on a mission to France, with the object of treating for a marriage between Richard, prince of Wales, and the daughter of the French king, Charles V.

This appears to have been the most busy period of Chaucer's life, and one in which he enjoyed a considerable degree of opulence; for there is reason to conclude that, taking into account the entire product of his places, pensions, and grants, and allowing very moderately for his paternal inheritance, he could not have an income, estimated by the denominations of the money of the present times, of less than 1500*l.* or 1600*l.* per annum; a revenue, too, which had been justly earned by splendid talent, personal merit, and useful exertion. It is an eulogy, indeed, on the character and sound sense of John of Gaunt, that though, towards the close of the reign of Edward III., he possessed almost all the power and patronage of government, was more than ordinarily attached to Chaucer, and a lover of the muses, he yet chose to found his friend's claims to remuneration on services which might be appreciated not merely by men of literature, then few and widely dispersed, but by the great body of the nobles and people. It was, however, far from the wish or contemplation of the duke that either commercial or political engagements should materially interfere with, much less extinguish, the inspiration of the poet; and, in fact, we find that, during this period of official occupation, Chaucer produced, beside smaller pieces, at least two poems of considerable length and beauty,—"The Floure and the Lefe," and "The House of Fame."

That these were written anterior to 1382 may be inferred from the circumstance of allusions being made to them, as previous compositions, in the "Legende of Gode Women;" a poem supposed, with much probability, to have been composed at the commencement of the above period. That the "House of Fame," moreover, was the production of his leisure, whilst comptroller of the customs, seems probable from a passage in this alle-

gory, where he is told by the eagle, in reference to his business of keeping accounts, that

——when thy labour al done is,
And hast made al thy reckenings,—
Thou goest home. *

"The Floure and the Lefe," well known to the reader of modern poetry by the exquisite imitation of Dryden, —the most delightful work, perhaps, of that consummate master of versification,—exhibits Chaucer's management of the stanza of seven lines to great advantage. It is also full of the most gay and brilliant imagery; and the allegorical personages, the ladies of the leaf and flower, are not only singularly pleasing in themselves, but they afford occasion for many admirably drawn descriptions of the rural and vegetable world; whilst, at the same time, the moral is impressive and correct, and insinuated with no little address.

Of a character more elaborate and philosophic, and containing yet grander and more daring strokes of imagination, is "The House of Fame," a vision, in three books, written in the eight-line metre, and, like "The Floure and the Lefe," honoured by the imitation of one of the most harmonious constructers of English rhyme; the "Temple of Fame" of Pope being little more than a copy of the third and concluding part of the work of the elder bard. That it was written towards the close of the reign of Edward III., or the very commencement of that of Richard II., when the poet was fifty or upwards, may be deduced from his telling us, in the second book, verse 487., when speaking of himself, "For I am olde;" a declaration which, if considered as meaning, what it could indeed then only apply to, an age of full maturity, is corroborated by our discovering the poem, notwithstanding the imaginative cast of its fable, to abound in traits of character and humour. It has been supposed, though perhaps without sufficient foundation, that "The House of Fame" is a translation from some Provençal or Italian original. With some probability, indeed, it

* Book ii. v. 139.

may be conceded, in reference to one or two passages in the poem *, that the outline has been taken from a foreign source; but so completely is the imagery his own, —so rich in Gothic painting,—so purely is the tone of sentiment and thinking that of Chaucer,—so fresh and unadulterated, as it were, in manner,—that we cannot but consider the great body of the work as emanating nearly, if not altogether, from the feeling and the fancy of the English bard.

The accession of Richard II., owing to the influence of his steady friend the duke of Newcastle, made no immediate alteration in the prosperous circumstances of our poet; for on the very day after that on which king Edward died he received a renewal of the grant of comptroller of the customs, and in the months of March and April of the succeeding year a confirmation of his pension of twenty marks per annum, and a further grant of a like annuity, in exchange for the former daily allowance of a pitcher of wine.

Nor were these the only favours which were showered upon him during this early period of the new reign. In the opening of the year 1382 were celebrated the nuptials of Richard II., then but fifteen years old, with Anne of Bohemia, a most amiable and accomplished princess, of nearly similar age, who, it would appear, almost immediately after assuming her new dignity, patronised the poet; not only condescendingly suggesting to him, on his first appearance at court, a new subject for his muse, but, through her influence with the king, procuring him an additional mark of the royal bounty; —deductions which seem to be warranted by the circumstance that, in the poem just alluded to as suggested by the queen, namely, the "Legende of Gode Women," the author tells us his book is to be given to the queen on his "behalf, at Eltham or at Shene;" and from the further consideration that, about four months after the royal marriage, that is, on the 8th of May, 1382, he received the grant of the place of comptroller of the small customs,

* Vide book ii. v. 221. 526.

in addition to the similar office which he had for some time enjoyed in relation to the customs on wool.

The "Legende of Gode Women," which seems to be partly a translation, is written in the ten-line couplet or heroic metre; and, as the name imports, contains an ample eulogy on some of what the author considered the most praiseworthy of the sex. The virtue, however, chiefly lauded is fidelity in love; and another principal object appears to have been to make some atonement, and probably with the view of securing the smiles of the new queen, for the bitter satire with which he had treated the female world in his "Troilus and Creseide," and the "Romaunt of the Rose." It is evidently an unfinished piece; owing, perhaps, to its having been written on the spur of the occasion, as a presentation poem at court; for the number of female worthies intended to be celebrated are mentioned as nineteen, independent of Alcestis, their leader and queen, whilst but ten are commemorated in the poem.

One of the prominent features in the "Legende of Gode Women" is the amorous worship of the daisy; a fantastic fiction of the fourteenth century, originating amongst the French, and which, as built on the supposition that Alcestis, the faithful wife of Admetus, and who died to save him, was, after her death, transformed into a daisy, seemed imperatively to claim a place in the poem. This adoration of a favourite flower had been briefly noticed by our bard, in his "Court of Love," as early as 1346; and again, with some modifications, in the "Floure and Lefe," but nowhere with such circumstantiality and solemnity as in the piece before us. We may also add, that in the "Legende of Gode Women" are several touches of sly but playful irony, much luxuriancy of fancy, and a style in general perspicuous, spirited, and graceful.

The tide of prosperity, which hitherto ran in favour of Chaucer, now began to turn against him. A conspiracy to destroy the influence, and even the life, of his great patron, John of Gaunt, had been formed by

the ministers of Richard II.; and this, in 1384, terminated in a crisis which compelled the poet to seek shelter in a foreign land. The duke, who had from the first supported the doctrines of the zealous reformer Wickliffe, and who was, of course, highly obnoxious to the clergy of the church of Rome, had now, from the weight and dignity of his character, become an object of similar hatred and fear to the profligate courtiers of Richard, and both strenuously united in the endeavour to achieve his downfal. A contention for the chief magistracy of the city of London, which occurred at this period, afforded an opportunity for unmasking the preconcerted plot. The two candidates were sir Nicholas Brember, brought forward by the government, and John of Northampton, by the popular party; the former subservient to all the views of the court, and the latter a man of strict integrity and tried talent, a staunch friend of the Wickliffian reformation, and under the avowed protection of the duke of Lancaster. It was, therefore, considered as a preparatory step toward the ruin of his grace, that the pretensions of this man should be defeated; and Chaucer, who had penetrated into the designs of the unprincipled advisers of the king; who had every motive for a zealous love and admiration of his patron, then absent in Scotland; who had embraced the doctrines of Wickliffe, and approved the character of Northampton; very naturally, and very justly interested himself in support of a cause so immediately connected with the welfare of John of Gaunt, and the good government of his native city. The interposition, however, of military force speedily turned the scale; and, though the conspirators failed as to their ultimate views in regard to the duke, they obtained a victory in the present contest: John of Northampton was imprisoned, preparatory to his trial; and Chaucer, sought after and threatened with a similar fate, took refuge, a few months afterwards, on the continent.

He appears, in the first instance, to have fixed on Hainault as the seat of his exile; but, after a short

residence there, to have retired to the province of Zealand, where, finding several sufferers in the same cause, and who, like himself, had fled from the arm of vindictive power, he generously, and to the utmost of his means, relieved their necessities. He was shortly, however, condemned to feel the very want which he had so deeply commiserated in others; for the persons on whom he had relied for the security of his property at home, basely betrayed his confidence, disposed of his apartments, appropriated his rents, and withheld every portion of his income. This was the more distressing, as there is reason to infer from these and other circumstances, that his wife and children were the partners of his flight; the latter consisting of two sons, Thomas, then about thirteen years of age, and Lewis, only in his fourth year.

When we reflect on the previous life of the bard; when we call to mind that he had, from an early period, been the favoured companion of the great, the noble, and the learned; that he had been cherished by royalty itself; had lived in a style of elegance, hospitality, and literary luxury; and, above all, that, as a poet, he had been a source of ever-increasing wonder and delight to admiring thousands; we may easily picture to ourselves the state of misery and destitution to which he was now reduced, when poor, deserted, and oppressed, a wanderer on a foreign strand, he in vain looked to the shores of his native island for sympathy or aid, and only beheld those with whom he had acted, making their peace with Richard and his ministers, without an effort on his behalf, or a thought of his sufferings.

The mind of Chaucer, however, was not to be subdued by the pressure of adversity; and, stung with indignation at the perfidy and ingratitude of his former associates and pretended friends, he boldly resolved on returning to England; and, after confronting those who had plundered him of his property, to sink, if possible, into the bosom of domestic quiet, aloof from all further political contention. It would appear that he had put this

plan into execution toward the latter end of 1386: for in the October of this year we have a record of his testimony given in a cause depending between sir Richard le Scrope and sir John Grosvenor, at St. Margaret's church, Westminster; so that it is probable he was absent little more than eighteen months on the continent. He was not suffered, however, to remain long at large; for, before the close of the year, he was arrested by an order from the government, now under the absolute control of Thomas of Woodstock, and committed a prisoner to the Tower, and almost immediately afterwards, namely, in December, 1386, he was deprived of his two offices of comptroller of the customs.

For at least two years and a half did he continue under close confinement, the victim of obloquy and unmerited persecution. Nor were the evils of absolute poverty wanting to surcharge the cup of misery; for, losing the greater part of his income by the privation of his offices, he was compelled, in May, 1388, to sell his two pensions of twenty marks each, in order to relieve the urgent demands of himself, his wife, and children: "for richesse," he complains, describing his then calamitous condition, "have I povertie; for dignitie, now am I enprisoned; instede of power, wretchednesse I suffre; and, for glory of renome, I am now dispised and foulie hated."*

Yet Chaucer, though in prison and in poverty, in solitude and humiliation, possessed and duly cherished the inestimable consolations of literature and religion. To his firm determination of bearing up under the weight of his afflictions, by the exercise of his mental powers, we owe the "Testament of Love," a prose dialogue, written in imitation of the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius; a work which he had translated in his youth, and which now, under circumstances similar to those which had befallen the pious Roman, he was desirous of emulating in an original composition. It is an allegory, in which Love, sometimes in a spiritual,

* Testament of Love, Urry's ed. vol. i. p. 502.

and sometimes in a material sense, instead of Philosophy, as in Boethius, visits the cell of the prisoner; and it appears to have engaged his attention throughout the whole course of his confinement. It was not, however, there is reason to conclude, the sole occupation of his melancholy hours; for two "Poems, supposed to be written by Chaucer during his Imprisonment," have lately been published by Mr. Todd, which not only, in point of style, bear strong marks of authenticity, but include a passage that seems evidently to allude to the "Testament of Love," as the one great business of his prison solitude. The poet, after lamenting that all worldly joy is passed and gone, says, in lines of great emphasis and beauty,—

> As thus I lay avexed full sore,—
> I herde a voyce seyyng, Sclepe thou no more*:—
> Arise up, and wake to thy besy cure†;
> Take thy penne in thy hand, stedfaste and sure;
> Awake, awake —
> feythfully I belevyd
> That the voice came from the celestyall place;
> Wherefore I aryse, not gretely agrevyd,
> And besaught God of hys especyall grace,
> That he wolde be my socoure.‡

At length, after an imprisonment of nearly two years and a half, Chaucer was set at liberty during the summer of 1389; but not before he had submitted to make an ample disclosure of all that was required of him, and to impeach his former associates; a concession which, considering the confederacy he had joined, had nothing of criminality in it, but was, indeed, based on patriotic motives, must be pronounced a deplorable want of consistency and resolution. It is, however, the only serious blemish in the life of one to whom his country owes many obligations, and may in a great measure be attri-

* *I herde a voyce seyyng, Sclepe thou no more.*] "The commentators on Shakspeare will be delighted with this poem, if it be only for the sake of placing the exclamation in this line under that of Macbeth,

> Methought I heard a voice cry, Sleep no more!
> Macbeth hath murder'd sleep, &c."—Todd

† —— *wake to thy besy cure.*] "This, I conceive, alludes to his employment in prison, the composition of the *Testament of Love*."—Todd.

‡ Todd's Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer, pp. 297—299.

buted to the galling circumstance, that the very men who had been his allies in the task of political regeneration were those who had conspired during his exile to rob him of his only means of support; a delinquency which, unfortunately for his own fair fame and peace of mind, he thought entitled them rather to his revenge than his protection. We learn, indeed, from the "Testament of Love," which, though written under the immediate pressure of suffering, was not published until 1393, and it is a lesson of no light value, that his conduct in this particular brought on him the charge of falsehood and ingratitude, and long oppressed him with a load of severe obloquy and censure.

If during the last five years, so pregnant with misfortune to Chaucer, the duke of Lancaster had preserved his influence over the councils of the young king, or had even been resident in England, much of what the poet was condemned to suffer had been spared; but the machinations of the duke's enemies in the first instance, the ambitious domination of Thomas of Woodstock in the second, and, finally, the absence of his grace either in Scotland or Spain for the entire period, deprived him of all his wonted protection, and left him naked, as it were, to the storm.

It would seem, however, that the unreserved confession of Chaucer to the king, who, in May, 1389, had shaken off the usurped authority of Thomas of Woodstock, had the effect of restoring him to royal favour; for, on the 12th of July of this year, there appears a patent conferring on him the office of clerk of the works at Westminster, and another in the same month of the following year, entitling him to a similar situation at Windsor, with the power of appointing a deputy, a privilege of which, as we learn by a record in the rolls*, he availed himself on the 22d of January, 1391. For reasons, however, which cannot now be ascertained, we find, that only a few months after this date, namely, in the September of the same year, he was no longer in

* Pat. 14 Ric. 2. p. 2. m. 34.

possession of these places, as a document exists declaratory of their being held at this period by a person of the name of Gedney.* It is probable, indeed, that the duke of Lancaster, who had returned to England in November, 1389, greatly enriched by his expedition, and high in favour with the king, might enable Chaucer, now in his sixty-third year, to resign the fatigues of office. At all events it seems reasonable to credit the tradition which speaks of his retirement to Woodstock to have occurred about the same period, more especially as it receives confirmation from the circumstance that the elementary treatise on astronomy, which, under the title of "Conclusions of the Astrolabie," he addressed to his "littel Lowys," then ten years of age, includes the date of the 12th of March, 1391, and is said to be "compowned after the latitude of Oxenforde;" so that we may presume it to have been written in that neighbourhood, and that almost immediately after reaching his rural retreat he devoted his first leisure to the affectionate task of instructing his youngest son.

How many conflicting emotions must have agitated the bosom of Chaucer on re-occupying this beautiful spot, the scene of former happiness, when, in early manhood, and under the approving smile of royalty itself, life was unfolding to his delighted gaze the path to fame and honour! He had now returned, a pilgrim grey with years, versed in the ways of man, and experienced in all the trying vicissitudes of fortune; but, though way-worn and wounded by calamity, yet calm and cheerful, patient and resigned; in a frame of mind, indeed, and with a knowledge of human nature, in every respect calculated for the execution of the great work he was now meditating.†

* Pat. 15 Ric. 2. p. 1. m. 24. Vide Godwin's Life of Chaucer, vol. iv. p. 67. 8vo. edit.

† I cannot here resist the pleasure of quoting the inscription by Akenside for a statue of Chaucer at Woodstock, as it seems to point to the period of his life which we have now reached, and paints with happy discrimination some of the peculiar features of his genius as developed in the Canterbury Tales: —

Such was old Chaucer, such the placid mien
Of him who first with harmony inform'd

It will readily be perceived that we allude to the "Canterbury Tales," which we have some authority for believing were not commenced before the year 1393, about two years after the poet's return to Woodstock. This deduction is partly founded on the fact that the "Confessio Amantis" of Gower, which we know from the author himself to have been published in the sixteenth year of Richard II., that is, in the year 1393, omits, whilst complimenting Chaucer, all mention of the Canterbury Tales; and partly on the circumstance that Chaucer has evidently imitated a portion of this work of Gower in his Man of Lawe's Tale, and is conjectured, moreover, in its prologue, to have indirectly satirised his brother bard. From this sarcasm, and the suppression in some manuscripts of the Confessio Amantis, of the compliment paid to Chaucer has also been deduced, not without some plausibility, the conclusion, that the friendship between Gower and Chaucer, which had subsisted for more than forty years, was in their old age, either from personal pique or political animosity, if not entirely broken through, yet greatly diminished. Let us hope, however, that, as in the similar supposed breach between Shakspeare and Jonson, the inference, which is here altogether the birth of modern ingenuity, is not correctly formed: for no old writer has ever alluded to this quarrel; and Berthelet, in the preface to his edition of the Confessio Amantis, in 1532, says they were not only "both great frendes together, and both alyke endeavoured themselves and employed theyr tyme wel and vertuously," but "that they dyd passe

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The language of our fathers. Here he dwelt
For many a cheerful day. These ancient walls
Have often heard him while his legends blithe
He sang of love or knighthood, or the wiles
Of homely life, through each estate and age
The fashions and the follies of the world
With cunning hand pourtraying. Though perchance
From BLENHEIM's towers, O stranger, thou art come,
Glowing with CHURCHILL's trophies, yet in vain
Dost thou applaud them, if thy breast be cold
To him, this other hero, who in times
Dark and untaught, began with charming verse
To tame the rudeness of his native land.

forth theyr lyfes here right honourably;" a testimony which Fox, the martyrologist, has repeated in nearly the same words, and which may induce us to hope, that the omission in Gower was accidental, and that the sarcasm in Chaucer has been misinterpreted.

It is to this masterly work of his old age that Chaucer is principally indebted for his fame with posterity; for though his previous productions had exhibited no ordinary proofs of imagination and descriptive power, it is here alone that life, with all its various shades of character, was depicted with a strength and truth of outline, and filled up with a delicacy and discrimination of touch which has scarcely had a parallel.

No fable, perhaps, was ever more happily chosen, or more skilfully conducted, than that which binds together the Canterbury Tales. Collections of stories, indeed, both on the Continent, and in this island, were singularly abundant during the fourteenth century; but, with the exception of the Decamerone of Boccaccio among the Italians, and the Confessio Amantis of Gower among ourselves, we have no instance of an attempt to connect a series by any regular plot or dramatic form; and it reflects high honour on the genius of Chaucer, that, in the construction of his plan for this purpose, he has greatly excelled his two predecessors.

The poet tells us, that, anxious to offer up his devotions at the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, he put up his horse at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. Here he found assembled for the same journey, and with the same object, not less than twenty-nine pilgrims, who, according to the custom of the age, meet together in one room to supper, and soon agree to prosecute their journey the following morning in company. The host, who had given them plenty of good cheer, and who is represented as a shrewd, yet "ryht mery man," immediately after supper proposes, that in order to shorten the way, and render their pilgrimage the more pleasant, each of them should consent to tell a story on the road to Canterbury, and another in coming back; and that he who should be

allowed to have told the best and most interesting tales, should have on their return, and in that very room, a supper at the common expense. He further adds, that in the hope of making them the "more mery," he will himself gladly, and at his own cost, join the party, and moreover act as their director and guide, provided they will assent to the proposition, that whoever resists his authority, when installed in his office, shall be compelled to pay the entire charges of their journey. They cheerfully, and with great good humour, enter into the spirit of their host's plan; and appointing him not only their governor, but the judge and reporter of their tales, unanimously agree to abide by his pilotage and advice.

It must be immediately apparent that this scheme unfolds one of the finest fields imaginable for the delineation of life and manners; and, in fact, though the work be not half completed, it includes highly finished portraits of almost every character in the middle classes of society as then existing in England. This has happily arisen from the structure of the fable, which opens with a PROLOGUE, of which the greater part is occupied by a minute description of the various personages who composed the party. These are thirty in number, including Chaucer himself and the host, and we have four-and-twenty tales recited during their journey to the shrine, independent of introductory and connecting matter. But of what happened at Canterbury, of the tales intended to be given whilst on their return, and of the epilogue describing the award of the host, and the festivities of the consequent supper, not a line appears to have been written.

Though deeply regretting that such an admirable design should have been left unfinished, we have yet great reason to rejoice that the venerable bard was spared for the execution of what we possess. Indeed it is a matter of just surprise that, considering his advanced age, and the vicissitudes of fortune to which he had been subjected, he should have yet retained in their full vigour the elasticity of mind and powers of genius necessary for

so stupendous an undertaking. The knowledge of the world, however, which these mutabilities brought with them, together with that which sprung from the various official duties which he had been called upon to discharge, enabled him, unbroken as he was in health and intellectual energy, to give an almost unparalleled delineation of national and individual manners.

Of this picture, then, as exhibited in the prologue, and in which, as Warton has observed, "the figures are all British, and bear no suspicious signatures of classical, Italian, or French imitation;" and where the pursuits, occupations, the dress, customs, and amusements of our forefathers are copied from the life, it will doubtless be highly acceptable should we venture in this place to introduce a slight analysis, now and then interspersing and enlivening the detail with specimens of the author's own inimitable colouring, and occasionally noticing, as we proceed, the tales ascribed to the various members of the pilgrimage.

The procession is, with due attention to rank, headed by THE KNIGHT, who is represented as the very flower of courtesy and chivalry, and who, in strict accordance with the usage of the knights of his time, had repeatedly fought against the infidels in Europe, Asia, and Africa. He is said to have been in fifteen mortal battles; to have thrice entered the lists in defence of his faith at Tramissene in Africa; to have assisted at the sieges of Granada and Algezires in Spain; to have fought with the Prussians against the infidels of Lithuania; and to have been aiding at the capture of Alexandria. With all this heroism he is, in conformity with the laws of chivalry, a pattern of meekness and forbearance; in short, as the poet tells us,

He was a very parfit gentil knight.

It is added, that he wore a gipon, or under coat of fustian, stained by his armour, and that both himself and his horse bore the marks of having lately returned from one of his continental expeditions.

The tale appropriated to this personage is the cele-

brated one of Palamon and Arcite, founded, in a great measure, on the Theseid of Boccaccio; but abounding, at the same time, with so many additional beauties from the pen of Chaucer, as to give it an air of perfect originality. The story is well told, and highly interesting: it contains many sublime and pathetic passages, and is singularly rich in delineating the beauties of nature, of which the following instance, descriptive of a sun-rising, may vie with any in the compass of English poetry:—

> The mery lark messengere of the day,
> Saluteth in her song the morowe gray;
> And firie Phebus rysith up, so bright
> That all the orient laughith at the sight·
> And with his stremis dryeth in the greves *
> The silver dropis hanging in the leves

Nor can we omit, what gives an inexpressible charm to this morning landscape, the introduction into it of the lovely heroine of the piece,—

> ——— Emilie, that fairir was to sene
> Than is the lillie upon the stalk grene;
> And fresher than the May with flouris newe,
> For with the rosy colour strofe hir hewe.

The knight is accompanied by his son THE SQUIER, a young man twenty years of age, and a perfect exemplar of the beau and gallant of the reign of Edward III. He has his hair nicely curled and "laide in presse," and is said to have made military excursions into Flanders, Artois, and Picardy, in hopes of recommending himself to his lady's grace. The following description of his dress and accomplishments is admirably drawn: —

> Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
> Alle ful of fresshe floures, white and rede.
> Singing he was, or floyting † alle the day,
> He was as fresshe, as is the moneth of May.
> Short was his goune, with sleves long and wide.
> Wel coude he sitte on hors, and fayre ride.
> He coude songes make, and wel endite,
> Juste and eke dance, and wel poutraie and write.
> So hote he loved, that by nightertale ‡
> He slep no more than doth the nightingale.
> Curteis he was, lowly, and servisable,
> And carf § before his fader at the table.

The story which is put into the mouth of this "lusty bachelor" is one of the most remarkable in the collection

* Groves.
† Playing on the flute.
‡ Night-time.
§ Carved.

for its powers of imagination. It is an amalgamation of Oriental and Gothic fiction, and possesses all the wild fabling and interest of an Arabian tale. The opening is peculiarly striking. Cambuscan, the king of Tartary, is represented as celebrating his birthday with his nobles in his palace at Sarra, when, in the height of their hilarity, they are panic-struck by the entrance of a most unexpected guest.

While that the king sate thus in his noblay *,
Herkining his minstrelis their thingis play,
Before him at his bord deliciously,
In at the hallè dore, ful suddeinly,
There came a knight upon a stede of brass;
And in his honde a brode mirrour of glass:
Upon his thombe he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a nakid sword hanging,
And up he rideth to the hie bord;
In al the hall ne was there spoke a word
For marveile of this knight him to behold.

The horse, the mirror, the ring, and the sword, were gifts to Cambuscan from the king of Araby and Inde: the first, on touching a secret spring, would convey its rider, in twenty-four hours, to the remotest part of the globe, and would vanish and return at his bidding; the second had the power of depicting on its surface any treason or disaster which threatened the person or kingdom of Cambuscan; the third could not only pierce armour vaunted as impenetrable, but likewise heal the very wound it had inflicted; whilst the fourth, destined for Canace, the daughter of Cambuscan, endowed her, during the time she wore it, with a knowledge of the virtues of plants, and the language of birds. It is much to be regretted that this wildly romantic tale is left unfinished; it seems forcibly to have struck the imagination of Milton, who characterises the venerable bard by this very narrative: —

—— Call up him who left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold.

The Squier's Yeman, or only attendant, is an accurate picture of the forester of his time: he is clothed in a coat and hood of green, has a sheaf of arrows

* Pomp, splendour.

plumed with peacock's feathers in his belt, and a mighty bow in his hand. On his arm he has a bracer, whilst on one side hang a sword and buckler, and on the other a gay dagger; he has also a silver Christopher on his breast, that is, a silver clasp or buckle with the figure of the saint on it, and a sash or baudrick of green, from which is suspended his horn. No tale is ascribed to this personage.

THE PRIORESSE presents us with a full-drawn portrait of a delicate and amiable lady, but somewhat too affectedly fashionable and sentimental: —

——— She was cleped madame Eglentine.
Ful wel she sange the service devine,
Entuned in hire nose ful swetely;
And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe;

a passage from which we learn, that though the French language was then in as much vogue as now, it was not taught with much correctness as to pronunciation, at least at the Benedictine nunnery at Stratford, being rather English French than French of Paris. She is then represented as peculiarly delicate and precise in her manner of helping herself at table; and her compassion, it appears, like that of many a modern fine lady, had a very comprehensive range: —

——— For to speaken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous
Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flesh, and milk and wastel brede.
But sore wept she if on of 'hem were dede,
Or if men smote it with a yerde * smert:
And all was conscience and tender herte.

The picture concludes with a singularly appropriate description of her features and dress: —

Ful semely hire wimple † ypinched was;
Hire nose tretis ‡; hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful smale, and thereto soft and red;
But sikerly she hadde a fayre forehed,
It was almost a spanne brode I trowe;
For hardily she was not undergrowe. §

* A rod or staff.
† A woman's hood.
‡ Straight and well-shaped.
§ Of a low stature.

Ful fetise was hire cloke, as I was ware.
Of small corall aboute hire arm she bare
A pair of bedes, gauded all with grene;
And thereon heng a broche of gold ful shene,
On whiche was first ywritten a crouned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*

The tale of the little child slain in Jewry, which the prioress relates, is in perfect accordance with her compassionate tenderness of heart, and is one proof, amongst many, of the deep pathos and touching simplicity, of the perfect trust and confidence in nature, which so remarkably distinguish much of the serious poetry of Chaucer.

Of the Nonne and the Nonne's Preest, though tales are given to both, there is nothing in the prologue but the bare annunciation of each, as forming a part of the procession; and, therefore, after remarking that the tale of the "Cock and the Fox," recited by the priest, is an exquisite example of Chaucer's powers of description, and has been most beautifully paraphrased by Dryden, we proceed to notice

The Monk, who is represented as a disciple of the world, averse to study, and passionately addicted to the sports of the field: —

—— Many a deinte hors hadde he in stable;
And whan he rode men mighte his bridel here
Gingeling in a whistling wind as clere,
And eke as loude, as doth the chapell belle.

The person and dress of this jolly and luxurious ecclesiastic, of whom it is said that "hunting for the hare was all his lust," are described with inimitable spirit: —

I saw his sleves purfiled at the hond
With gris *, and that the finest of the lond.
And for to fasten his hood under his chinne,
He hadde of gold ywrought a curious pinne;
A love-knotte in the greter end there was.
His hed was balled, and shone as any glas,
And eke his face as it hadde ben anoint.
He was a lord ful fat and in good point.
His eyen stepe, and rolling in his hed,
That stemed as a forneis of a led.
His botes souple, his hors in gret estat,
Now certainly he was a fayre prelat.
He was not pale as a forpined † gost.
A fat swan loved he best of any rost.
His palfrey was as broune as is a bery.

* A species of fur. † Wasted away.

Of a character still more sensual and corrupt is his meet companion, THE FRERE, who is licensed to beg and to receive confessions within certain districts, and whose qualifications for the procurement of alms both from rich and poor appear to have been of the first order:—

Ful wel beloved, and familiar was he
With frankeleins over all in his contree,
And eke with worthy wimmen of the toun:
For he had power of confession,
As saide himselfe, more than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licentiat.
Ful swetely herde he confession
And plesant was his absolution.
He was an esy man to give penance.—
His tippet was ay farsed * ful of knives
And pinnes, for to given fayre wives.
And certainly he hadde a mery note.
Wel coude he singe and plaien on a rote. †
He was the beste begger in all his hous.—
For though a widewe hadde but a shoo,
Yet wold he have a ferthing or he went.

Notwithstanding all this solicitation as a mendicant for his convent, our friar was not a little attentive to his dress and personal attractions;

For ther was he nat like a cloisterere,
With thredbare cope as is a poure scolere,
But he was like a maister or a pope
Of double worsted was his semicope,
That round was as a belle out of the presse;
Somwhat he lisped for his wantonnesse,
To make his English swete upon his tonge;
And in his harping, whan that he hadde songe,
His eyen twinkeled in his hed aright,
As don the sterres in a frosty night.

To THE MARCHANT, who follows next on a lofty steed, dressed in a motley-coloured garment with a forked beard, a Flanders beaver hat, and light-made boots, is given the celebrated story of "January and May;" a story which displays not only many traits of genuine humour, but also many passages of high-wrought description, and which has been rendered familiar to modern ears by the elegant paraphrase of Pope.

It is to the succeeding pilgrim, THE CLERK OF OXENFORDE, that we are indebted for the story of the

* Stuffed. † A musical instrument.

"Patient Grisildis." This grave but interesting personage is drawn with the aspect and habitudes of a hard student: he is lean and hollow-eyed, clothed in a threadbare surcoat, and regardless of all worldly business: —

For him was lever han at his beddes hed
A twenty bokes, clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle, and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fidel, or sautrie.

It is then added, in sly allusion to the alchemical dreams of the day,

But all be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre.

Than the pathos which characterises the story of Grisildis nothing can be more pure and exquisite; it is, indeed, intensely absorbing, but, as chiefly depending on the nature and results of the incidents, cannot adequately admit of being exemplified by a quotation. The opening sketch, however, of the person and character of the hapless maiden may be detached without suffering from the separation, and it is of inimitable grace and beauty.

Among this poure folk ther dwelt a man
Which that was holden pourest of hem all
But highe God somtime senden can
His grace unto a litel oxes stall:
Janicola men of that thorpe* him call.
A doughter had he, faire ynough to sight,
And Grisildis this yonge maiden hight.

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
Than was she on the fairest under sonne:
Ful pourely yfostered up was she:
No likerous lust was in hire herte yronne;
Ful ofter of the well than of the tonne
She dranke, and for she wolde vertue plese,
She knew wel labour, but non idel ese.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee
Ther was enclosed sad and ripe corage:
And in gret reverence and charitee
Hire olde poure fader fostred she:
A few sheep spinning on the field she kept,
She wolde not ben idel til she slept.

And whan she homward came she wolde bring
Wortes and other herbes times oft,
The which she shred and sethe for hire living,
And made hire bed ful hard, and nothing soft:
And ay she kept hire fadres lif on loft,

* A village.

With every obeisance and diligence,
That child may don to fadres reverence.

The professional importance of THE SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, who

For his science, and for his high renoun,
Of fees and robes had he many on,

is hit off with consummate skill,

No wher so besy a man as he ther n'as,
And yet he semed besier than he was.

In the prologue to the tale of Custance and her child Maurice which this character relates, Chaucer has taken an opportunity of expatiating on the merits of his own poetry, but in a manner sufficiently modest and impartial to escape the charge of vanity or presumption.

With this man of law travels THE FRANKLEIN, a wealthy freeholder, who had presided at the sessions, and had been sheriff and knight of the shire. He is delineated with a white beard and sanguine complexion, and with an anelace or knife, and a purse of white silk hanging at his girdle. His chief characteristics, however, are his epicurism and boundless hospitality, which are painted in the following extract, and especially towards its close, in a masterly manner; with a spirit, indeed, which would have done honour to Horace or to Pope:—

Withouten bake mete never was his hous,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,
It snewed * in his hous of mete and drinke,
Of alle deintees that men coud thinke,
After the sondry sesons of the yere,
So changed he his mete and his soupere. †
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe,
And many a breme, and many a luce in stewe.
Wo was his coke, but if his sauce were
Poinant and sharpe, and redy all his gere.
His table dormant ‡ in his halle alway,
Stode redy covered alle the longe day.

We are now introduced to a group of five city mechanics; namely, THE HABERDASHER, THE CARPENTER, THE WEBBE or WEAVER, THE DYER, and THE TAPISER or TAPESTRY-MAKER. They are said to be all clothed alike in the livery of one "grete fraternite,"

* Snowed. † Supper. ‡ Fixed, ready.

and to be in port, and size, and talents, fit for aldermen, and worthy of occupying a seat at the high table or deis in a guildhall. The tales intended for these citizens are either lost, or were probably never commenced.

A personage of no little importance to the members of the pilgrimage then makes his appearance under the appellation of THE COKE, and receives due honour for his critical knowledge of London ale, for his roasting, seething, broiling, frying, baking and boiling, and, above all, for his *blanc manger* which he "made with the best."

THE SHIPMAN next occurs, a mariner, who "rode upon a rouncie as he couthe," whose beard had been shaken by many a tempest, and whose complexion was "al broun" from the influence of climate. He is dressed in a gown falling to the knee, with a dagger under his arm suspended from his neck by a lace; certainly, says the poet, "he was a good felaw," though

Of nice conscience toke he no kepe;

a remark of which the tale he tells is sufficiently licentious to afford a proof.

The DOCTOUR OF PHISIKE follows, who is grounded not only in physic and surgery, but in astronomy and magic; for

He kept his patient a ful gret del
In houres by his magike naturel.
Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his images for his patient.

This solemn personage is clothed in garments of purple and blue, lined with taffety and silk, and is indeed "a veray parfite practisour,"

Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
To send him dragges *, and his lettuaries,
For eche of hem made other for to winne.

He appears, however, to have possessed all the medical erudition of his times, and to have been especially con-

* Drugs.

versant with the writings of the Greek and Arabian physicians:

Wel knew he the old Esculapius,
And Dioscorides, and eke Rufus·
Old Hippocras, Hali, and Gallien,
Serapion, Rasis, and Avicen,
Averrois, Damascene, and Constantin,
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertin

We have then a sly satirical stroke, which, it is to be apprehended, may yet apply to too many of the profession —

His studie was but litel on the Bible,

and the character closes with another humorous illustration of one of the doctor's partialities —

—— Gold in phisike is a cordial,
Therefore he loved gold in special

From this learned follower of Galen, who relates the classical story of Virginia, our attention is attracted by a pilgrim of the softer sex, THE WIF OF BATHE, who is justly praised for her useful qualifications, amongst which is her great skill in the art of making fine cloth for herself and family. Her personal appearance, whilst journeying to Canterbury, is thus described: —

Gap-tothed was she sothly for to say
Upon an ambler esily she sat,
Ywimpled wel, and on hire hede an hat,
As brode as is a bokeler, or a targe
A fore-mantel about hire hippes large,
And on hire fete a pair of sporres sharpe.

But on a Sunday, at church, where she wishes to assume the character of a woman of consequence, her habiliments are of a more costly description; whilst her jealousy as to precedence is marked by a fine stroke of satire: —

Hire coverchiefs weren ful fine of ground,
I durst swere they weyeden * a pound,
That on the Sonday were upon hire hede
Hire hosen weren of fine scarlet rede,
Ful streite yteyed, and shoon ful moist and newe —
In all the parish wif ne was ther non,
That to the offring before hire shulde gon,
And if ther did, certain so wroth was she,
That she was out of alle charitee

* Weighed.

Of the hilarity and sociability of her manners and disposition the poet has contrived to give us a pretty decisive sketch, by stating,

In felawship wel coude she laughe and carpe;

and adding,

She was a worthy woman all hire live,
Housbondes at the chirche dore had she had five.

The prologue and tale ascribed to this jolly dame are exquisitely adapted to her character, and, though too licentious, are pregnant with the richest humour. They are well known by the spirited imitations of Dryden and Pope.

A perfect contrast to the preceding portrait will be found in the delineation of THE PERSONE,—a picture which reflects the highest credit on both the head and the heart of the venerable bard. It is said that Dryden, in his noble imitation of it, had the pious bishop Ken in view; and Mr. Todd, with great probability, thinks that Goldsmith also had this engaging description in his mind, when he drew the Ecclesiastic of his "Deserted Village." The sanctity, simplicity, and apostolical zeal of Chaucer's priest are vividly brought before us in the following lines: —

A good man ther was of religioun,
That was a poure PERSONE of a toun:
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche.
His parishens * devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversite ful patient:
And swiche † he was ypreved often sithes. ‡
Ful loth were him to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven out of doute,
Unto his poure parishens aboute,
Of his offring, and eke of his substance.
He coude in litel thing have suffisance.
Wide was his parish, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder,
In sikenesse and in mischief to visite
The ferrest in his parish, moche and lite,
Upon his fete, and in his hand a staf.
He was to sinful men not dispitous,
Ne of his speche dangerous ne digne,
But in his teching discrete and benigne.

* Parishioners. † Such. ‡ Often times.

To drawen folk to heven, with fairenesse,
By good ensample, was his besinesse:
But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were of highe, or low estat,
Him wolde he snibben * sharply for the nones †
A better preest I trowe that no wher non is.
He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him no spiced conscience,
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve
He taught, but first he folwed it himselve.

The tale, if it may oe so called, or rather treatise on penitence, which this good man recites, is the last and longest in the collection, and, it must be confessed, not a little tedious; but, as Mr. Tyrwhitt has remarked, "considering the Canterbury Tales as a great picture of life and manners, the piece would not have been complete, if it had not included the religion of that time.

It would appear at first sight, that the next pilgrim who is mentioned, namely, The Plowman, could not be well chosen as the companion, or brother as he is said to be, of the preceding exalted character: but, in fact, in the few lines which describe him, he is gifted with virtues that might recommend him to the fellowship of the most perfect of mankind; for he is drawn not only as singularly industrious, but as living in peace and charity with all men, and as willing to assist the poor without hire for Christ's sake; in short, as loving God with his whole heart under all circumstances of gain or loss, and his neighbour as himself.

At the close of this brief but comprehensive eulogy, the poet enumerates the pilgrims he had yet to notice; "These were," says he, "a *Reve*, and a *Miller*, a *Sompnour*, a *Pardoner*, a *Manciple*, and *Myself*, and no more."

He then proceeds to paint The Miller in colours which render him truly formidable: for he is not only brawny, and of prodigious strength, but exhibits a beard red as a fox, and broad as a spade; he has a wart on his nose tufted with bristles, with nostrils black and wide, and with a mouth large as that of a furnace.

* Reprove. † For the occasion.

To these beauties of person it is added that he was a babbler and gross jester, and

Wel coude he stelen corne, and tollen thries.

His dress is a white coat with a blue hood, and he plays well and loudly on the bagpipe.

The broad and salacious humour which distinguishes the Miller's tale is in perfect harmony with the coarseness of his manners; and the levity and licentiousness of the incidents, flagrant as they are, are in a considerable degree compensated by numerous and very powerful touches of character. Nothing, indeed, can be drawn with more vigour and vivacity than are the chief actors in this story, more especially the young astrologer Nicholas, Absalon the parish clerk, and the blooming wife of the carpenter of Oseney Abbey. In describing the latter, the versification of Chaucer occasionally assumes a finish and elegance scarcely surpassed by the couplets of Dryden or Pope; an assertion of which the following lines will probably be considered as offering no slight proof: —

Ful brighter was the shining of her hewe,
Than in the Towre the noble forged newe.
But of her songe she was so loud and yerne*,
As any swallow sitting on a berne †
Hir mouth was swete as brackit or the methe ‡,
Or horde of apples layd in hay or hethe.
Winsing she was as is a jollie colt,
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.

The Manciple, an officer whose business it was to purchase provisions for the Inns of Court, is next described, and from him we have the old Ovidian fable of the crow; but retold with many and great improvements.

Of The Reve, or steward, we are favoured with a minute description: he is a slender choleric man, very lean, with long calfless legs like staves; his hair cropped and docked before like a priest, and his beard close shaven; he rides upon a dappled gray, in a long

* Shrill. † Barn.
‡ "Bracket," a drink used in Wales made of honey, spices, &c. "Methe," mead."

surcoat of light blue, and with a rusty blade by his side.

"This character, remarks Warton, "is happily pictured. His attention to the care and custody of the manors, the produce of which was then kept in hand for furnishing his lord's table, perpetually employs his time, preys upon his thoughts, and makes him lean and cholerick. He is the terror of bailiffs and hinds; and is remarkable for his circumspection, vigilance, and subtlety. He is never in arrears, and no auditor is able to over-reach or detect him in his accounts; yet he makes more commodious purchases for himself than for his master, without forfeiting the good will or bounty of the latter. Amidst these strokes of satire, Chaucer's genius for descriptive painting breaks forth in the simple and beautiful description of the Reve's rural habitation:—

> His wonning was ful fayre upon an heth,
> With grene trees yshadowed was his place."*

The tale recited by this irascible personage, and entitled the "Miller of Trompington," is selected by him in revenge of the Miller's story; it abounds, like that, in humour and character; and, like that, is also, we regret to say, highly indecorous,—a fault, however, rather of the age than of the poet.

The Sompnour, or summoner of uncanonical offenders into the archdeacon's court, is an admirable full length satire on the ecclesiastical proceedings of the age; for nothing can form a stronger contrast to the profession of this pilgrim than his *features* and *disposition:* the former presenting a visage indicative of inordinate indulgence, being of a fiery red, and covered with pimples, whelks, and knobbs, the consequence of excess in drinking; whilst the latter, corresponding with the exterior indication, is loose and libidinous in the extreme. Between the Frere and the Sompnour there appears to exist the utmost animosity, no two professions being more immediately opposed; and the tale told by the latter is a violent attack on the mendicant friars. "Though

* History of English Poetry, vol. i. p. 451.

exceedingly offensive," observes Mr. Godwin, "for the clownish joke with which it is terminated, it is equal in its opening and preparatory circumstances to any satirical narrative that ever was penned. The entrance of the friar into the house of the sick man, his driving away the sleeping cat from the bench he thought proper to occupy, the manner in which he lays down his walking stick, his scrip, and his hat, and the conversation which follows, are all in the most exquisite style of comic delineation." *

The worthy friend and companion of this profligate is The Pardoner, a retailer of papal indulgences and a vender of relics, whose wallet, besides an abundance of pardons, "al hote from Rome," contains, amongst other articles for credulity to feed upon, the Virgin Mary's veil, and a portion of the sail of St. Peter's ship. He is drawn with long yellow hair, dishevelled and hanging in shreds on his shoulders, with a cap and vernicle, or portrait of our Saviour, sewed on it, but no hood; his wallet in his lap, and a cross of laton, or copper gilt, in his hand; it is added that his eyes are glaring like a hare, and his voice small as that of a goat. The story ascribed to this impostor, however, is possessed of considerable merit, both in a moral and dramatic point of view.

To the pilgrims now enumerated we have to add Chaucer himself, whose manner and appearance on his journey to Canterbury will be noticed hereafter. He favours us with two tales: the "Rime of Sire Thopas," a ridicule of, or parody on, the bad poetry and extravagant fictions of his times, in relating which, however, he is cut short by the impatience of the host; and then, after indirectly approving the interference, he substitutes the simple and instructive prose narrative of "Melibæus, a moral tale vertuous."

It may be necessary in this place to remark, that the tales are not given to the pilgrims in the order in which these personages are enumerated in the prologue, but are so introduced as not only to contrast powerfully with

* Life of Chaucer, vol. iv. p. 188.

each other, but to exhibit also, with a similar happy opposition of character, the persons and manners of the relaters.

When we consider, indeed, the exquisite irony and nice discernment which pervade the description of the pilgrims in the prologue; when we recollect that each tale is adapted with infinite tact and propriety to the character of the personage who recites it; and when we call to mind the varied range of composition which these narratives display—the epic splendour of the knight's tale, the wild imagination and Oriental fabling of the squire's, the deep and heart-rending pathos of the clerk of Oxenford's, as developed in the story of Grisildis, and the rich though broad humour of the miller's and the wife of Bath's—together with the vast store of comic painting, sly satire, romantic incident, and picturesque description, with which the residue abounds; we cannot but stand amazed at the depth and versatility of the poet's talents.

About a year after the commencement of the Canterbury Tales, and with the view, no doubt, of rendering his situation more comfortable and independent during the prosecution of his great work, we find a grant to Chaucer from the king, of twenty pounds per annum, dated February, 1394,—a mark of attention and respect to literature which may, with great probability, be attributed to the continued influence and support of his long-tried friend the duke of Lancaster; an inference the more readily admissible, as it proved but a prelude to further and more munificent liberality apparently from the same quarter.

In July, 1394, died Constance, second duchess of Lancaster; an event which led, in January, 1396, to the duke's public espousal of Catharine Swinford, widow of Sir Hugh Swinford, and the sister of Chaucer's wife, a lady with whom he had been long connected, and who had borne him three children. These, it appears, were legitimated by act of parliament, in 1397; and it is remarkable, that during this very year Chaucer is represented by Mr. Grose, on the authority of a manuscript in

the Cotton library, to have purchased Donnington castle, in the county of Berkshire; a place recorded by several other antiquaries *, and by two of his biographers †, to have been the residence of the poet for the last few years of his life. Now, as the finances of Chaucer were at this time evidently inadequate to such a purchase, it has been conjectured by one of his latest biographers ‡, that the mode by which Donnington came into the possession of the poet was through the munificence of the duke of Lancaster, who, kind as he had ever been to the bard, from a love of literature and personal regard, now felt generously determined that, as the brother-in-law of his wife, he should be placed in a station in society more consonant with the rank to which he had elevated her. It would seem, however, rather inconsistent with the supposition of this splendid gift, that, on the 4th of May, in the year following its possession, occurs a patent from the king, granting to Chaucer, whilst engaged on urgent business for his sovereign in different parts of his dominions, a protection for a term of two years against all interruption from arrests and prosecutions. Yet, if it be considered that from previous misfortunes he was probably still much in debt, and that, as the occupant of Donnington castle, he must necessarily have to support an establishment much larger than he had hitherto done, we may easily conceive that a security of this kind would, in the first year or two at least of his residence there, prove highly acceptable. How far the employments alluded to in the patent took him from his new retirement, or whether they were little more than nominal, cannot now be ascertained; but that he had spent some portion of his latter days at Donnington, and had taken delight in its walks and groves, may be inferred from the tradition of his having distinguished three oaks in its park of remarkable size and beauty, and which were standing in Speght's time, by the names of the King's,

* Antiquities of England and Wales, vol. i., and Camden's Scriptores Britannici, cap. DV., and Ashmole's Antiquities of Berkshire, vol. ii.
† Speght, and the Author of his Life in Urry's edition.
‡ Godwin's Life of Chaucer, vol. iv. p. 105, *et seq.* 8vo. edition.

the Queen's, and Chaucer's oak; under the twilight of whose gigantic boughs we may presume him to have indulged, with a mind at peace within itself, in many a retrospection of his eventful times.

As a compensation, perhaps, for the business alluded to in the patent of protection, the autumn of the year 1398 came to our bard accompanied with a further accession of income—the grant of an annual tun of wine from the unfortunate Richard II., now fast hastening to the termination of his career. The deposition of the monarch, however, was preceded a few months by the decease of one whose loss to Chaucer must have been irreparable; for, on the 3d of February, 1399, expired John of Gaunt duke of Lancaster; a nobleman of an enlarged mind and many virtues, and who, there is every reason to suppose, had never looked upon Chaucer but with eyes of kindness and affection.

Yet, in a pecuniary point of view, Chaucer had nothing to complain of; for Henry IV. seems in this respect to have trodden both in the footsteps of his two immediate predecessors on the throne, and of his father, John of Gaunt—having scarcely exercised the functions of royalty a month, ere he bestowed upon him a confirmation of his former grants, together with an additional annuity of forty marks, whilst, at the same time, his son Thomas was appointed to the office of his chief butler, and in the second year of his reign made speaker of the house of commons.

The only remarkable event which we have now to relate of our poet occurs in the last year of his life, when he went up to London, as Leland says, for the arrangement of his affairs, but, it would appear, with the settled purpose also of making it the residence of his latter days; for a record is extant which proves that, on the 24th of December, 1399, he took a long lease, from the abbot, prior, and convent of Westminster, of a house situate in the garden of their chapel; and in this house, which is supposed to have occupied the ground where now stands the beautiful chapel of Henry VII., Chaucer ex-

pired on the 25th of October, 1400, at the age of seventy-two.

We have reason to conclude, from the pathetic stanzas entitled "Gode Counsaile of Chaucer," and which are said to have been written on his death-bed, that he took leave of this world with a resignation and composure of mind not readily to be surpassed, and with an interest in the moral welfare of those around him which irresistibly impresses us with the conviction that he died, as he had lived, in the exercise of good offices towards his fellow-creatures, and in a firm reliance on the mercies of his God.

Westminster abbey, the burial place of our kings and heroes, received the remains of Chaucer; and this noble building has, from such a precedent, ever since been the chosen repository of the ashes of learning and genius. The venerable Caxton, England's first typographer, had the honour of placing the first inscription, now obliterated, over the grave of the poet; and about the middle of the sixteenth century, Nicholas Brigham, an enthusiastic admirer of the Muses, erected, within a beautiful recess, and nearly on the same spot, the monument now existing to his memory.*

Of the literary and poetical character of Chaucer it may be remarked, in addition to what has already been said whilst cursorily noticing his various productions, that to no individual, perhaps, has our language been more indebted than to the author of the Canterbury Tales. He found his native tongue a mixed and uncouth dialect of Norman-Saxon, rude, and undigested, and with no writers whom he could consider in any respect as a guide or model; for Gower's great English

* The following inscription still remains on this monument: —

M. S.
Qui fuit Anglorum vates ter maximus olim,
Galfridus Chaucer conditur hoc tumulo:
Annum si quæras Domini, si tempora vitæ,
Ecce notæ subsunt quæ tibi cuncta notunt.
25 Octobris, 1400.
Erumnarum requies mors.
N. Brigham hos fecit Musarum nomine sumptus.
1556.

work, the "Confessio Amantis," appeared only, as we have seen, towards the close of his life. He therefore necessarily turned his eyes to foreign resources; and we find that the greater part of his poetical career was employed in translating, though with great freedom, and with much intermixture of original matter, from the Latin, French, and Italian. In doing this, however, he enriched his own language with a vast store of verbal wealth, especially derived from the latter source; and, moreover, moulded what he had taken into a form of such unprecedented beauty and perspicuity, when compared with any previous English poem, that those who immediately succeeded him scarcely ever speak of his style but in terms of enthusiastic rapture. When we consider, indeed, how greatly superior to his contemporaries was the mechanism of his versification, which, though from change of accent unaccommodated to a modern ear, was, in the then construction of the language, beyond all example harmonious and correct; that he was the inventor, or at least the first adopter, of the heroic, or ten-syllable couplet, and that he greatly improved every other metre which he used; the admiration of his disciples, however warmly expressed, seems justly his due. It may, in short, be affirmed, that even now, by him who will take the trouble of becoming familiar with the style of Chaucer, there will often be found, both in his diction and versification, a certain natural sweetness, simplicity, and naïveté, hardly to be met with elsewhere.

If, turning from the structure of his diction and versification to the consideration of the higher attributes which more immediately constitute the poet, we contrast what he has produced in these departments with the age in which he lived, and more particularly in his great original work, the Canterbury Tales, can we hesitate in pronouncing him one of the most extraordinary men to which his country has given birth? That he is not unfrequently, in common with his contemporaries, coarse and indecorous, and, in his earlier works especially, has

indulged greatly too much in allegory, the fashionable error of his times, will not be denied; but when these are weighed against the rich fund of description and imagination which his writings every where display, and, above all, against the humour, pathos, and exquisite delineation of character so abundant in the work of his latter days, they become as mere dust in the balance. In short, it may be added, that in knowledge of human life, and in the power of delineating it, he has no superior, save Shakspeare, with whom, indeed, in universality of talent, he may justly be compared.

Of an individual so deservedly celebrated, and who has been correctly designated as the father of English poetry, it may with laudable curiosity be enquired, what were his habits, temper, and personal appearance? and with a brief reply to these queries we shall conclude our sketch.

To Chaucer himself, and to an early embellished copy of his Canterbury Tales, we are indebted for a picture of his dress and person whilst engaged in the composition of this his last admirable work. In the manuscript alluded to, and which is of the fifteenth century and in the possession of the marquis of Stafford, with illuminated capitals, and coloured figures in the margin, the poet is drawn, at the commencement of the tale of Melibæus, on horseback, in a vest or gipon of dark velvet, with a bonnet of the same colour, with his anelace gilt, his boots black, and with the trappings of his steed partially gilt *; and in the tales themselves, Chaucer thus pourtrays his own figure, from which we learn that he was corpulent, had a custom of looking on the ground, and carried in his countenance an expression of sly humour: —

> —— Our hoste to japen he began —
> And said thus: What man art thou? quod he.
> Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,
> For ever on the ground I see thee stare.
> Approché nere, and loke up merily! —

* Vide Todd's Illustrations of the Lives of Gower and Chaucer, p 269.; and the frontispiece to his book, which is a fac-simile of the miniature in the Stafford manuscript.

Now ware ye, sirs, and let this man have place!
He in the waste is shapen as well as I:
This were a popet in an arme to embrace
For any woman smal and faire of face.
He semeth elvish by his contenance,
For unto no wight doth he daliance.

In his temper, if we may judge from tradition, and, above all, from his writings, which luxuriate in descriptions of beauty, harmony, and gaiety, he was to the last cheerful, equable, and serene, and accompanied by a sincerity, sweetness, and openness of expression, which endeared him to all who came within the sphere of his influence, and rendered him alike, in friendship and in love, unchanging, kind, and gentle.

His habits and manners must, from the long and varied intercourse which he held with the higher classes of society, have been easy, frank, and disengaged; whilst, at the same time, the vicissitudes which he had experienced had taught him not only to sympathise keenly with the misfortunes of others, but to endure them himself with philosophic resignation. There have been few, indeed, who have passed through greater mutations in life than did Chaucer: for we may consider him as having filled, in a greater or less degree, the varied parts of a student, a lawyer, and a soldier; a poet, a courtier, and an ambassador; a minister, an exile, and a prisoner.

Yet though necessarily occupied for a considerable portion of his time by official duties, or the routine of a court, though naturally social and even convivial in his converse with the world, and somewhat careless of expense in his modes of living, his dearest and most valued enjoyments seem to have been derived from the love of nature and the love of books; features of his character which cannot but be indelibly impressed upon every reader of his works, and especially of his earlier pieces: for no one has excelled Chaucer in the beauty and freshness of his landscape-painting, and no one has spoken of the delights of study with more deep and enthusiastic feeling.

JOHN HEYWOOD.

Died 1565.

THE ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH STAGE.

As John Heywood is the first of our known dramatists whose works are likely to interest the reader, we select him in preference to his predecessors, for the purpose of dwelling at considerable length on the origin and early history of our stage. The subject is little known, because the sources of information are either in MSS. hitherto inedited, or in printed books so scarce, as to be equally inaccessible to the public. Though our inquiries respecting it must necessarily be elaborate, we hope to render it more popular than it has yet been. We may add, that they will serve as a proper introduction, not only to the biographical sketch of John Heywood, but to the lives of all the dramatists who are intended to be embraced in the present collection.

For the sake of clearness we divide the present subject into three parts.

I. ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH STAGE.

The origin of the English stage is lost in the night of antiquity. Our dramatic historians, indeed, have been content to prove that the eleventh century had its theatrical representations. Thus they have adduced the well-known passage of Matthew Paris to the effect that Geoffrey, a learned Norman, composed at Dunstable the miracle play of St. Catherine, and that for its performances he borrowed copies from the neighbouring monastery of St. Alban's.* That the period

* "Ubi (Dunstaple) quendam ludum de S. Caterina (quem miraculum vulgariter appellamur) fecit," &c.

of its composition was considerably prior to 1119 is certain; for in that year the author was elected abbot of that magnificent establishment,—an election that was long subsequent to the first representation of the piece. Equally correct is the assertion, that in the course of the twelfth century, such performances were usual. We learn from an unquestionable authority—that of William FitzStephen, the contemporary biographer of Thomas à Becket—that London in particular was distinguished for them.* From the words in which this information is conveyed,—Londonia pro spectaculis theatralibus, pro ludis scenicis, ludos habet sanctiores,†—we may infer that profane no less than sacred subjects were represented. That the latter were far from a novelty, and were common in Paris at least, where Geoffrey was educated, and where he imbibed a love for the custom, is expressly affirmed by Du Boulay, historian of that renowned university.‡ And that the former were frequent in England, may be inferred from a regulation in the Burton annals, which prohibits strolling players from performing in presence of the inmates of the monastery; yet which allows their wants to be relieved, not because they were players, but because they were poor.§ Such language would assuredly not have been levelled at *sacred* exhibitions, which in reality were believed to have a good tendency, and were therefore much encouraged by different churches.||

Theatrical performances, whether sacred or profane, whether exhibited by churchmen or laymen, are of much higher antiquity than is generally supposed. Allusion

* "Londonia pro spectaculis theatralibus, pro ludis scenicis, ludos habet sanctiores,—representationes miraculorum quæ sancti confessores operati sunt, seu representationes passionum quibus claruit constantia martyrum."

† Simple as is the tenor of these words, they have been mistranslated by Warton and his followers: "London, for its theatrical exhibitions, has holy plays on the representation of miracles wrought by confessors, and of the sufferings of the martyrs."

‡ "Non novo quidem instituto, sed de consuetudine magistrorum et scholarum."

§ "Histrionibus potest dari cibus quia pauperes sunt, non quia histriones," &c.

|| Matthæus Parisiensis, A.D. 1110.—Annales Burtonenses.—Warton, History of English Poetry.—Fitz-Stephen, Historia Londoniæ.—Historia Histrionica, &c.

is made to them in the canons of provincial councils, and in the epistles of fathers, many centuries before the period assigned for their restoration: it is to be found, too, in several legal codes, which at one time partook largely of the ecclesiastical character; and the custom is reprehended alike in the canons of the Toledan and French councils, and in the capitularies of the Carlovingian kings. But we may ascend still higher; for Clement and Basil, Cyril and Tertullian, equally condemn them. It may, indeed, be doubted whether theatrical representations have ever ceased since the days of Thespis. Certain at least it is that, in every country visited by the conquering legions of Rome, traces of their existence are to be discovered or inferred throughout the succession of ages. Every Roman station of much note had its theatre as well as its temple; and we may reasonably infer that the taste thus introduced among the natives would, in the cities and towns, survive the domination of that extraordinary people. Writers who so laboriously endeavour to defend an hypothesis, to prove that the profane is the legitimate daughter of the sacred drama, never dream that possibly the former, however obstructed in certain countries at certain times, may have descended from the ancient Greeks to ourselves. We believe that from Eschylus to Shakspeare the succession is unbroken. Let those who maintain that the profane drama ceased in the third, or at most in the fourth century, attend to some plain facts and dates:—1. In 401, the bishops of Africa applied to the reigning emperor for the suppression of plays on Sundays and other great festivals: but even this moderate request was not granted until 425. In the same laudable spirit the fathers of the church, who were anxious to extirpate the lingering traces of paganism, had compelled the female converts to renounce the theatrical profession: but such was the empire of custom, that the younger Theodosius was compelled to recal the prohibition. In the fifth century, two, Salvian of Marseilles and Sidonius

Apollinaris, bear testimony to the fondness of the people for theatrical representations. If, says the former, the barbarian Franks pause for a moment in the career of conquest, the native Gauls run to the theatre and the circus. The latter severely condemns the custom, which he describes as very general: on market and fair days, he observes, the rustics were eager to witness the performances acted in the public streets,— performances often injurious to morality. 3. When Carthage was taken by Genseric, the inhabitants were at the theatre. 4. From an edict of Justinian (588), which forbids bishops, presbyters, and deacons attending such representations, we may assume that their attendance had become so general as to be an evil: the permission, however, was still left to the inferior orders of the hierarchy,— to subdeacons, lectors, censors, acolites, and ostiarics. That the prohibition was not rigorously observed, is evident from the example of Gregory, bishop of Antioch, who, soon afterwards being present at a play, was ridiculed alike by spectators and actors. 5. A century afterwards, a Constantinopolitan council went still further, and forbade the laity no less than the clergy to witness such exhibitions.* 6. But, human curiosity was more powerful than the authority of the venerable fathers; for, in the ninth century, the canons sanctioned by Nicephorus and Photius relaxed so far as to insist on the theatres being closed only on Sundays and other great festivals. That in the western church plays were beheld with equal dislike by ecclesiastical rulers, is evident from the invectives levelled at them by many bishops; by the canons of the Spanish, German, and French councils, especially in the time of the Carlovingian sovereigns; and by Agobard of Lyons. But the clergy still found that their thunders were harmless; and, as the desire of such novelties was too deeply implanted in human nature to be eradicated by civil or ecclesiastical censures,

* The penalty was, ει μη κληρικος ειη, καθαιρεισθαι· ει και λαικος, αφοριζεσθαι.

they endeavoured at length to direct what they could not abolish. In this view, they substituted sacred for profane subjects, and thereby gave rise to the religious dramas so famous in the history of the stage.* When this innovation — for such it was — was introduced, is matter of doubt. It is impossible that Apollinaris of Laodicea, who turned the most striking events of the Scriptures into comedies and tragedies, should have been the first, since we read of a Jew, who long before exercised his dramatic ingenuity on the book of Exodus.† Of the bishop's labours, no record remains; and of the Jew's a few scanty fragments only have survived the ravages of time. The first specimen of the kind that has descended to our days is the Χριστος πασχων, or Passion of Christ, which our historians of the stage have universally ascribed to St. Gregory of Nazianzen, but which, in reality, is of a subsequent age.

By whom this celebrated piece — absurdly celebrated, as the origin of the religious drama throughout Europe — was composed, is impossible to be ascertained. That before criticism was much understood, it should be ascribed to St. Gregory, need not surprise us; but that after the remarks of the most learned and acute among ecclesiastical writers, — of Tillemont and Baillet, of Baronius and Bellarmin, of Dupin and Vossius, of Rivet and Labbæus, of Ceillier and Fleury, — all our historians of the stage should persist in assigning it to that prelate, is sufficiently strange. "It has nothing," says Ceillier, whose erudition is little valued

* If any faith were to be reposed in a writer not much distinguished for criticism or research (Dibdin, "Complete History of the English Stage), "The priests of France willingly turned their churches into theatres, where they permitted ridiculous farces, indecent dances, and sacrilegious buffooneries. The very vaults where the saints were deposited echoed with scandalous and impious songs. Upon these occasions, the priests often turned actors, and sometimes actresses, hiding their sanctity and their sacerdotal robes under grotesque habits and ridiculous masks; in which disguises they frequently got drunk, quarrelled, and fought. These disgraceful spectacles continued more or less, according to circumstances, till about the middle of the twelfth century, when Eudes de Sully, bishop of Paris, thundered his anathemas against these sacred farces." (Vol. i. p 180.)

It would be difficult to find another passage in any author so full of blunders.

† Some inconsiderable fragments still remaining in Greek iambics, were translated into Latin by Morellus, Paris 1580.

because little known in this country, "either of the nobleness or of the gravity which reign in the poetry of St. Gregory; the style is neither so pure nor so diversified; the conceptions are neither so just nor so elevated. It has scarcely any of the similies so common in the acknowledged pieces of this saint. In this tragedy the Holy Virgin is the chief actress; and she is represented with many weaknesses, with sentiments ill-regulated, and not over-christian. Now she is scandalised at the death of a God*, now she is agitated by a base fear, unworthy of the confidence attributed to her by the fathers of the church; at other times she is furious against the authors of Christ's death, on whom she lavishes the bitterest reproaches, on whom she imprecates the most dreadful punishments." Again, that some of the passages are evidently founded on the apocryphal gospels, — the abhorrence of the early fathers. We hear, too, of churches every where founded in honour of the Virgin, yet we know that, prior to the sixth century, such dedications were unknown. So forcible were these objections, and the authority of the great names before mentioned, that even Cave, the least critical, and we may add, the most accessible of such writers, places the tragedy in question among the *opera spuria* of St. Gregory. Cave, however is less judicious, when he affirms that probably it is the production of Apollinaris the elder.* As this prelate lived in the fourth century, he could not allude to the universality of a custom (the dedication of churches to the Virgin Mary) which did not exist before the sixth; as a monothelite who rejected the two natures in Jesus Christ, he could not be the author of passages which distinctly acknowledge both: we may add, that his style was much more easy, more flowing, than that of the drama before us. Very probably the true author is Gregory, Bishop of Antioch (572), who, from the identity of name, might easily be confounded with his more illustrious predecessor.

* Christus Patiens, tragedia, quam ab Apollinari seniore scriptam esse verisimile est.

Returning from this digression, which, however attractive, must not be pursued here, we need scarcely observe, that whatever might be the origin of the religious drama, it was zealously cultivated during the middle ages by every nation in Europe,—by none more zealously than our own. Whether we derived it from the French, or from some other source common to both kingdoms, has been much disputed. If we looked only to the fact that the Saxons had certainly the elements, however rude, of dramatic representations,—that in the houses of the great, and even in some monasteries, on extraordinary occasions, persons intended to represent the characters of the Old and New Testament, and clad in peculiar garbs, held a dialogue together, we should adopt the latter hypothesis.* If, on the other hand, we were only to consider a fact equally undoubted,—that all our earliest state pieces extant are either translations or imitations from the Norman French,—we should as certainly incline to the former. The only reasonable solution is that both have contributed, though in a degree very unequal, to the same result. If there are no dramas which, whether religious or profane, may be satisfactorily traced to the Saxon times, we are not to infer that they have not existed *since* those times. The amusements of a people are like its language; they may be changed, they cannot easily be extirpated. It is, however, certain, that the drama, like every other subject of national culture, was chiefly supplied by the Normans. In fact, as nearly all the temporal barons, all the dignitaries of the church, all the inferior clergy, whether monks or seculars, were Normans, such representations could not be in the ancient language of the country,—a language despised by the writers. Hence, as the church perpetuated such only as were in the foreign idiom, and as the rest

* The Gleeman, among his other multifarious duties, had certainly those of the actor. This we infer from a canon in the Council of Cloveshoe, from two allusions in St. Elred; and from other passages the references of which we have mislaid. The Saxon word *gleeman* was uniformly rendered by *histrio*. See Junius, *in voce*.

were abandoned to the unlettered vulgar, we are able to explain why the latter have perished, while the former continue to slumber in the dust of our cathedral and collegiate libraries. As an intellectual people, and still more fond of parade, the Normans could not fail to be affected by the spirit which pervaded the greater part of Europe. In Italy as in Spain, in France as in Germany, miracle plays or mysteries may be proved to have been performed as early as the thirteenth century, —how much *earlier*, is matter rather of inference than of history. We are therefore prepared to find that from the same period such performances were common in England, and that a succession of them may be traced to the sixteenth century.

Why the thirteenth century should be more remarkable than any other in reference to the restoration of theatrical entertainments, has naturally struck the inquisitive reader. The usual explication may be given in the words of Boileau:—

" Chez nos dévots ayeux le théâtre abhorré
Fut long-temps dans la France un plaisir ignoré.
De pelerins, dit-on, une troupe grossière
En public à Paris y monta la première ;
Et sotement zelée en sa simplicité
Joua les saints, la Vierge, et Dieu, par piété.
Le savoir, à la fin, dissipant l'ignorance,
Fit voir de ce projet la dévote imprudence ;
On chassa ces docteurs prêchant sans mission,
On vit renaître Hector, Andromaque, Ilion."

But this explanation goes too far. Though Boileau and Voltaire might be unacquainted with the fact that the play of St. Catherine was performed in the university of Paris, before the palmers*,— who are here chiefly

* Every palmer was a pilgrim; but every pilgrim was not a palmer. The distinction was this. the pilgrim was so called if he had visited any foreign shore; the latter term was applied to those only who had visited the holy places of Palestine. In token of his more adventurous exploits, the palmer bore in his hat a small portion of the *palm* which so much abounds in the vicinity of Jerusalem; while the pilgrim who visited the shrine of Santiago, appeared with the scallop-shell so frequent in that neighbourhood:

meant,—were much known in France; though both might be ignorant of the express assertion of an ancient writer, that the custom of acting plays in the universities and schools was no novelty, but of long standing, even in the twelfth century, nothing is more certain than that the pilgrims did not introduce, they only diffused more widely, the mania of spiritual plays. In all that regarded the east, which the Saviour of mankind had consecrated by his birth, actions, sufferings, and passion, and which had been subsequently illustrated by numerous miracles, the devout were deeply interested. Witness the enthusiasm with which so many myriads assumed the cross; the burning tears shed by the assembled multitudes at the preaching of St. Bernard *; and the amusing instance recorded by Giraldus Cambrensis, of the effect produced even on the Welsh by his preaching at Haverford. The spirit of highly-wrought curiosity was abroad; thousands flocked to converse with the men who had worshipped in the holy places, and listened to their adventures with feelings rendered more intense by the common belief that the east was the peculiar abode of magicians and genii—of everything portentous in the whole range of being. This feeling is exhibited in every romance or poem of the middle ages,—no where more graphically than in the Gesta Romanorum, the romances of the Table Round, the poems of Bayardo, and his more illustrious successor, Ariosto. Innumerable are the instances still on record, where the pilgrim or the crusader was invited to the castles of the great, to edify them by the recital of such wonders: equally so where the people collected round him to hear, with breathless interest, what valour, or virtue, or magic had achieved. If the maxim "qui vient de loin peut mentir" was ever verified, it was on

"He quits his cell; the pilgrim-staff he bore,
And fix'd the *scallop* on his hat before."

Here Parnell is blundering; for no mere *hermit*, like the one in these popular verses, wore the scallop.

* "The eloquence of that man cannot be doubted, who sent 100,000 men into Palestine without going himself." *Hist. Litt. de la France*, xiii. 129, &c.

such occasions. The lore thus diffused was quickly incorporated into the miraculous belief of Europe; and, consequently, into those wonderful inventions, the popular romances, which, whether in verse or prose, even at this time, we peruse with fervour. The subjects of these recitations, however, chiefly regarded the actions and sufferings of our Saviour and his followers, and the exploits of the more renowned crusaders. The former, as we have already seen, were by no means new, since they had been exhibited in schools and colleges from time immemorial. They were soon invested in a dramatic form, and in the vulgar tongue, and were thereby rendered intelligible to the uneducated. The church could have no objection to permit, or even to join, such representations, since they were believed to have a good tendency; in fact, they must of necessity have diffused a knowledge of Scripture history among persons who, from inability to read, were lamentably ignorant of it. Something like a permanent establishment for the representation of private plays appears to have existed at St. Maur des Fossés, before the expiration of the fourteenth century. The first and most favourite of the performances was "La Mystere de la Passion," and from this circumstance the actors, of whom some were ecclesiastics, assumed the title of Confrères de la Passion. In this place we will not advert to the nature of the pieces, since in the course of the present Introduction we shall have to dwell on many which, though in our own language, are evidently derived from them. We will only observe that, however farcical, however ridiculous we might esteem them at this day, they were amazingly popular, — so popular indeed that the magistrates of Paris, in conjunction with some enlightened ecclesiastics, prohibited them, as injurious alike to the public tranquillity and the industry of the lower classes of people. But this suppression of an amusement, now become too general to be dispensed with, was of short continuance. The king (Charles V.), at the earnest solicitation of the confraternity, was pleased to re-establish it by his letters patent; and, as the estab-

lishment of St. Maur des Fossés had been seized by the civic authorities, the Hospital of the Trinity was now assigned to them. Here they remained for near a century, until the French stage forsook mysteries and morals for profane and historical subjects of representation. But we must not forget that, in all probability, these miracle and scriptural dramas were preceded by such as exhibited the valiant deeds of the crusaders. In their origin the latter were very rude. One person represented the soldan of Egypt or of Babylon, the other a favourite Christian hero: they met, talked, quarrelled, and fought, — always no doubt to the disadvantage of the misbeliever. By degrees other personages were admitted, and the dialogue prolonged; and something like a characteristic garb was provided for each of the combatants and speakers. Of these, many were pilgrims and crusaders; and as they had no stage, even no elevated scaffold, they took their stations in the most public thoroughfares, especially where three or four streets met, or in the squares. We find in several French writers of the period allusions to the men who, with staves in their hands and palm-leaves in their hats, and in a pilgrim garb, thus edified the staring populace. The display was lucrative, since most of the beholders were expected to contribute something to the performers; but when it thus became mercenary, it was no longer exercised by priests, palmers, or crusaders; it was wholly abandoned to such as had enough of the mimic spirit to amuse the spectators.—That traces of such rude performances may yet be discovered in several countries of Europe, is undoubted. In Italy, Germany, and France, instances have been adduced by recent travellers. They might have been discovered even in England. As late as the year 1809,— and possibly the custom may still be in force,—the writer of this sketch witnessed, on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire, on Good Friday, Saracens and Christians, Saladin, Richard, Edward, and other notable personages, represented by some

young men, whose uncouth, fantastic garbs were not the least remarkable feature of the scene. After a long dialogue, in verse, the language of which, though somewhat modernised, was evidently of considerable antiquity, the Soldan and Lion-heart crossed their tin swords, until the former was sent "howling to his native hell."

In England, as in France, religious plays were often exhibited in churches; and when by the ecclesiastical rulers such places were forbidden to be longer contaminated by scenes which must often have been licentious, the cemeteries or church-yards were selected for the purpose. As early as the thirteenth century, we have canons of councils expressly prohibiting the use even of the latter for such exhibitions. Thus in the Concilium Provinciale Scoticorum, held in the reign of of Alexander II., penalties are decreed against all players who desecrated by their performances either the inside of the church or the church-yard; and in a provincial synod held at Worcester, in 1240, the clergy were forbidden to appear at such exhibitions. It is true that the language of both canons might also be applied to bear-baiting, bull-fighting, cock-fighting, &c.; but such brutal sports, even in the darkest times, were never held *inside* a church: and that language can, in this case, mean no other than the rude dramatic exhibitions, so common at this period. This explanation acquires additional probability from a passage in the Manuel de Péché, — a composition usually attributed to Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln,—which expressly mentions both the interior and cemeteries of churches, as the places of such performances. The clergy were, in fact, often the chief actors; and it required all the authority of councils to wean them from this popular diversion.*

* "It is well known that dramatic poetry in this and most other nations of Europe owes its origin, or at least its revival, to those religious shows which in the dark ages were usually exhibited on the most solemn festivals. At those times they were wont to represent, in the churches, the lives and miracles of the saints, or some of the most important stories of Scripture. And as the most mysterious subjects were frequently chosen, such as the

That the progress of human improvement is slow, is a truth which, because it is trite, we do not sufficiently regard. In France,—and probably the case was exactly parallel in our own country,—a full century elapsed before even a stage was devised for the convenience alike of the actors and spectators. And even when a rude scaffold was introduced, there was no diversity of scene,—no exits and entrances; the actors intended to figure in any given piece appeared at its very commencement, and did not leave it until the conclusion. That this was the case even in the middle of the sixteenth century, is expressly asserted by the elder Scaliger:—"At present

Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ, &c., those exhibitions acquired the general name of *mysteries*. At first they were probably a kind of dumb shows, intermingled, it may be, with a few short speeches; at length they grew into a regular series of connected dialogues, formally divided into acts and scenes. Specimens of these, in their most improved state (being at best but poor artless compositions), may be seen among Dodsley's Old Plays, and in Osborne's Harleian Miscellany. How they were exhibited in their most simple form, we may learn from an ancient novel, often quoted by our old dramatic poets, entitled "A merye jest of a man that was called Howleglass," &c., being a translation from the Dutch language, in which he is named *Ulenspiegle*. Howleglass, whose waggish tricks are the subject of this book, after many adventures, comes to live with a priest, who makes him his parish clerk. This priest is described as having a *leman*, or concubine, who had but one eye, to whom Howleglass owed a grudge for revealing his rogueries to his master. The story thus proceeds:—"And than in the meane season, while Howleglass was parysh clarke, at Easter they should play the Resurrection of our Lorde: and for because than the men wer not learned, nor could not read, the priest toke his leman, and put her in the grave for an aungell. And this seing Howleglass, toke to hym iij of the symplest persons that were in the towne,

parson's leman with one eye.

"Then it fortuned that the tyme was come that they must playe, and the aungel asked them whom they sought, and than sayd they as Howleglass had shewed and lerned them before, and than answered they, We seke the priest's leman with one eye. And than the prieste might heare that he was mocked. And whan the priest's leman herd that, she arose out of the grave, and would have smyten with her fist Howleglass upon the cheke, but she missed him and smote one of the simple persons that played one of the thre Maries: and he gave her another; and then toke she him by the heare (hair), and that seing his wyfe come running hastely to smite the prieste's leman, and than the priest seeing this, caste down hys baner and went to helpe his woman, so that the one gave the other sore strokes, and made great noyse in the churche. And than Howleglass seying them lyinge together by the eares in the bodie of the churche, went his way out of the village, and came no more there."—Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, vol. i.

in France plays are so represented that every thing takes place in sight of the spectators: the whole apparatus consists of some high seats arranged in order. The actors during the whole representation never leave the stage: the moment they cease to speak, they are to be considered as absent. In truth it is very ridiculous that the spectators should perceive a performer listening, and that performer supposed not to hear what another speaks of him in his very presence; that he should be supposed to be absent while every body's eyes are fixed on him. The great object of the dramatic poet is to keep the minds of the spectators in suspense and expectation; but here there can be nothing new; and the attention is more likely to be satiated than excited." Whatever was the rudeness of the English stage prior to the fifteenth century, at that time we certainly find a more artificial expedient. *Then* there was a change of scene, inasmuch as there were often two, sometimes three distinct stages, which rose like the boxes of a theatre one above another: the highest was heaven, when there were three, the middle one earth, the lowest hell. These erections were temporary, and were indifferently called scaffolds, stages, and pageants. "And there is no doubt," says one who has paid more attention to the subject than any living writer, "that in some instances they were placed upon wheels, in order that they might be removed to various parts of large towns or cities, and the plays exhibited in succession. The testimony of archdeacon Rogers, who wrote his account of Chester prior to the death of Elizabeth, seems decisive upon this point, as far as the performances there are concerned. He says that the scaffold consisted of two rooms, a higher and a lower: in the lower, the performers attired themselves; and in the higher they acted; which was open at the top, in order that all might be able to see the exhibition. The same authority would lead us to the conclusion that only one scaffold, stage, or pageant was present at the same

time in the same place; and doubtless such was the fact according to the arrangement of the plays to which archdeacon Rogers refers. It is indisputable, however, that the Chester miracle-plays, as they exist in the British Museum, could not have been so represented. Some of the pieces require the employment of two and even three scaffolds, independent of other contrivances; the street also must here have been used, as several of the characters enter and go out on horseback." In regard to the other series of miracle-plays to be noticed hereafter, there was equal contrivance: thus in the Ludus Coventriæ "the place and the mid-place are mentioned as the scene of part of the action; and there can be no doubt, from the terms of some of the stage directions, that two, three, and even four scaffolds were erected round a centre, the performers proceeding, as occasion required, from one to the other across the mid-place." Nor was this all; for in one of the Towneley plays a team of oxen or of horses is necessary to draw the plough; and in another the interior of a cottage must have been represented, displaying a woman in bed, who pretended to have been just delivered of a child that lay by her in a cradle. But these improvements in the machinery of a piece could not have existed in the infancy of representation; and we may believe Strutt when he says that the stage consisted of three several platforms or stages, raised one above another. In the fifteenth century the same improvements were adopted in foreign countries, and were even carried to a greater extent. In 1486, when *La Mistère de la Passion*, or the Passion of our Saviour, was exhibited at Antwerp, the beholders were astonished by *five* different scaffolds, each having several stages rising perpendicularly: paradise was the most elevated, and it had two stages. But even this display was eclipsed by another exhibition of "la Passion," where no fewer than *nine* scaffolds attested the zeal of the people.

The intimate connection between this kingdom and

France so long as Normandy and Bretagne were ours, will sufficiently account for the rapidity with which theatrical pieces invented in the neighbouring country were imitated in this. In three or four years after the representation in the one we find it exhibited in the other, and in language so similar as to prove its direct translation. Nothing, indeed, could exceed the delight with which our ancestors witnessed the representation of miracle-plays; the more so as from the expense attending them they could not be a very frequent source of entertainment. They seem to have been customary in the great festivals of the church, when the people were suffered to escape from the labours and cares of life. Without a knowledge of their frequent recurrence, and in some degree of their contents, it is impossible to understand our old writers. In allusions to them Shakspeare, Chaucer, and Gower are perpetual. Thus Chaucer makes his Wife of Bath amuse herself with such shows during Lent:—

> "Therfore maid I my visitations,
> To vigilies and to processions,
> To prechings and to these pilgrimages,
> To playes of miracles and to mariages."

Again, the same writer describes the theatric taste of a priest:—

> "He plaieth Herod on a scaffold high."

And in the following passage from the Miller's Tale—

> "Hast thou not herd (quod Nicholas) also,
> The sowee of Noe with his felowship,
> Or that he might get his wife to ship?"

there is manifestly an allusion to the miracle-play of the Deluge, in which Noah had a ludicrous quarrel with his wife before he could prevail on her to leave her "gossips dear" and enter the ark. Innumerable are the passages concerning the characters of Scripture history, and containing particulars of which Scripture is totally silent, and which were immediately derived from some popular

piece, and in general founded on some apocryphal book of the Old or New Testament. Persons, however, who aspired to a superior sanctity, professed to hold such exhibitions in abhorrence:

> "We haunten no tavernes, ne hobelen abouten:
> At marketes and miracles we meddley us never."

says a friar minor in the Crede of Peirs Plouhman. Yet many ecclesiastics encouraged, and even openly appeared in them, on the pretence that they were full of edification. Early in the fourteenth century, a friar minor, who styles him a professor of holy pageantry, endeavoured to usurp the representation of a miracle-play at the festival of Corpus Christi; and later in the same century, the choristers and scholars of St. Paul's besought Richard II. to prohibit some ignorant and inexperienced persons from performing a series of historical plays, taken from the Old Testament. The ground on which the application rested was curious: the clergy of that church had expended a considerable sum of money in preparation for the exhibition at the ensuing Christmas, and would consequently be injured if opposed by rivals. Not unfrequently companies of players,—not, however, of the clerical order,—became itinerant, and proceeded from town to town with their scaffolds, costumes, &c. A trumpeter preceded them, proclaiming on what day and at what hour the exhibition would be held. A satirist, in the reign of Henry VI., is offended with these frequent desecrations of God's holidays, and he vents his pious complaint in a manner peculiar—not, indeed, to himself, for the ludicrous admixture of English and Latin in the same verse is to be found in other writers, but—to the period:

> Ingland goith to nought, *plus fecit homo viciosus*,
> To lust man is brought, *nimis est homo deliciosus*;
> Goddis holidays *non observantur honestè*,
> For unthryfty playis *in eis regnant manifestè*.

The writer's indignation was probably excited by the

custom to which we have already adverted,—that of celebrating religious plays in the churches; for in some of these MS. pieces, *cum cantu et organis*,—a proof that they were performed in holy places,—is as common as in the old missals, until the canons of councils extirpated the abuse.

Great as was the attachment of our ancient kings to theatrical representations, and frequently as these were exhibited at court, we do not find that any of them maintained permanent companies of players prior to Edward IV.; nor do we *certainly* know whether prior to the same period such companies were in the pay of the great nobles. We read, indeed, as early as the third Edward's reign, of *mimi domini regis*; but whether these were other than barbers may reasonably be doubted. In the same manner, when in records as old as the reign of Henry VI. we meet with such entries as "mimi domini Ferrers," "mimi domini de Warwyck," we are not sure that the word implies any thing more than the persons who figured in a dumb pageant; or at most, than the persons who performed parts on a level with that of the modern Punch. However this be, there was decidedly a considerable difference between this word and *lusores*; nor is it unworthy of remark, that while we read of "mimi domini de Astley," we also read of "lusores de Coventry," "lusores de Coleshille," &c. To us the latter term appears applicable to the performers of the drama, though it is often applied to musicians; the sense of the context only can determine that of the term. Reverting to the more immediate subject of the paragraph, the probability is, that both king and nobles, when about to give extraordinary entertainments, hired the services of such companies as were most celebrated for histrionic skill. This derives additional confirmation from the entries so frequently to be found in the household books of the great at different periods. These mention the sums of money paid on certain occasions to "arpers," "pleyers," "ministrelli," "mimi," "lusores": these seem so considerable as to

warrant the inference that the persons were in reality "merry vagabonds," and not in the permanent service of the monarch or noble. In the reign of Edward IV. we perceive that the duke of Gloucester had his players; and though no mention is expressly made of the king's players, we cannot reasonably suppose that one so fond of pomp and show as Edward would dispense with an amusement within the reach of a subject. Again, in the reign of the third Richard, we read that the duke of Norfolk had his players; and though those of Richard are also passed over in silence, we cannot suppose that the king was less magnificent than the duke of Gloucester. But he was outstript by his successor, Henry VII., who had two distinct companies of performers,—the players of interludes, and the gentlemen of the chapel royal. The latter appear to have combined the arts of singing and acting; and their histrionic labours, which are expressly mentioned at Christmas and other festivals, were probably confined to religious and moral subjects. From this reign, all our monarchs, and most of our nobles, had their companies of performers, until the regular establishment of the stage under Elizabeth rendered them unnecessary in the metropolis; but in the provinces they were continued until the parliament which rebelled against Charles I. put an end to the profession throughout the kingdom. Of these monarchs none were so munificent towards them as Henry VIII., whose expenditure in this respect was, as in every thing else, profuse. Though in the latter part of his reign an act was passed by Parliament for regulating, and, in some respects, for circumscribing, the amusements of the stage, it is evident that the royal indignation was levelled only at those who endeavoured to ridicule the dominant faith and discipline. The stage was soon discovered to be an instrument of some power for the dissemination of controversial points. In this reign plays were composed both to assail and to defend the established order of things: in that of Edward VI. they were generally on the side of the new

creed; in that of Mary, they were employed by the Catholics to diffuse the ancient doctrines; under Elizabeth, nothing was so popular as to represent the pope as a devil, and monks or nuns as his dearest offspring. The puritans of the following reign, whose profession it was to detest and anathematise every thing that had given pleasure to papist or episcopalian, king or noble, could not, consistently with their principles, use the same engine in their own behalf; but that they could destroy what might injure them as a party, was evinced in the lamentable reign of the second Stuart sovereign of these realms.

In tracing the early history of our national drama, we must contemplate it under its three great features, which are applicable to three distinct periods.—1. The *Miracle Plays*, or *Mysteries*, which continued in force to the reign of Henry VI. 2. The *Morals*, which subsisted down to the seventeenth century. 3. The *Legitimate Drama*, which, so far as its printed, or its extant MS., productions may guide us, originated in the sixteenth century.

1. *Miracle Plays.*

Besides numerous single plays, which were probably at some former period links in a chain of subjects, there are three distinct series of Mysteries or Miracle Plays,—the *Chester*, the *Towneley* or *Widkirk*, and the *Coventry*.

Of these the first in the order of time may probably be the Cheeter series*, though if the question were to be decided by internal evidence, the Towneley would appear to haye equal claim to the distinction. Internal evidence, however, is not a safe guide, inasmuch as the language of all the dramas has been modernised by transcribers. In their present form, the oldest MS. of these three series—the Towneley Mysteries—can

* Of this series, there are two copies among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, one at the Bodleian, and one in the possession of the duke of Devonshire. They bear the dates of 1600, 1607, 1604, and 1591 respectively.

be referred to a period more ancient than the middle of the fifteenth century.[1] (The oldest MS. of the Chester series is more recent by a century and a half.) All, however, are undoubted transcriptions from more ancient copies. "*The Banes*," a prologue to the Chester Plays, which was always read previous to the representation, supplies us with some data enabling us to assign a period approximating at least towards the true one.

"Reverende lordes and ladyes all,
That at this time here assembled bee,
By this messenge understand you shall,
That some times there was mayor of this citie,
Sir John Arnway, knyghte, who most worthilie
Contented himself to sett out in playe,
The devise of one Dom Randall, monke of Chester abbey."

This prologue, modernised as it evidently is, was doubtless written at a period much subsequent to the dramas themselves. There is, however, no reason to impugn the truth of the tradition, — if tradition it was, and not perpetuated by written evidence — that they were adapted to the stage by Dom Randal, and exhibited during the mayoralty of John Arnway. The names of these persons furnish the data by which we may establish the antiquity of these mysteries. From the testimony of ancient, almost of contemporary documents, it is certain that John Arnway was the chief magistrate of Chester between 1268 and 1276. An attempt, however, has been made to invalidate the antiquity of this period by two assertions; first, that the "Dom Randall" here mentioned was no other than the celebrated Ranulf, or Randal Higden, compiler of the Polychronicon[2]; and secondly, that the period in

[1] One in two single plays in the Museum may possibly be referred to the fourteenth century

[2] "1269. Sir John Arneway, Knight. In this year the Whitsun-plays were invented in Chester by one Randall Higden, a monk in the abbey of Chester, and afterwards put forth in action at the cost and charge of the citizens, which was great charges: and note, that this monk was a pious man, and a great writer in the abbey, as his books yet show: in great devotion and discretion he published the storie of the Bible, that the simple, in their own language, might understand." *Harleian MSS.* 2125.

But this was written above three centuries after the period of Arnway, and is consequently no authority.

which he lived will not agree with the date assigned. It may, however, be replied, that the name of *Randal* is one of frequent recurrence in the old archives, whether public or private, of Cheshire. Previously to the thirteenth century it was borne by three earls of the county, and there is nothing very reasonable in concluding that it was confined to one inmate of St. Werburg's monastery. That there was more than one *writer* of the name is by no means impossible. The objection, therefore, as far as it applies to the person indicated by "the Banes," is of little weight. Yet we do not mean absolutely to deny that the author of the Polychronicon was not also the author, or we should rather say the translator, of these dramas; nor is a reconciliation between this hypothesis and the age of Higden at all impracticable. This celebrated monk ends his chronicle in 1343; and that he did not long survive its conclusion may be inferred from his remarkable activity of mind. The man who could write so many books as we find enumerated by Leland, Bale, and Pitts,—omitting others which have either eluded the researches of antiquaries, or have perished—was likely to continue writing so long as he had strength to wield the pen. The year of his death, as given by Pitts, 1377, is wholly arbitrary, since he confesses that he had never seen the history of Higden, and since he errs egregiously as to the period of its termination.[1] Bale, the predecessor of Pitts by the greater part of a century, says, that he was alive in 1342, and that he was then accounted an *old* man.[2] Leland, the oldest of the three biographers, merely observes, that he lived in the reign of Edward III.[3] Rejecting, therefore, the random surmise of Pitts, and assuming, both from the year at which the work terminates, and from the evidence of Bale, that he died about 1343, we perceive nothing *impossible* in the hypothesis

[1] Historiam Ranulphi, multum quæsitam, nunquam inventam, mihi non visam fateor.

[2] Et ille erat ab incarnato Messiâ 1342, in quo senex claruisse fertur, sub eodem Edwardo rege.

[3] Ranulphum vixisse Edwardi tempore.

that he was the writer of the dramas performed in 1269. That his life was remarkably protracted—decrepitâ tandem senectute,—and that he was sixty years a monk at St. Wereberg's, is expressly affirmed by Bale. Seventy-four years, indeed, (1269—1343) *after* arriving at an age in which this monk was first capable of writing, implies a great though by no means extraordinary old age; since he might very well be able to translate the mysteries in question, before his twentieth or even his eighteenth year.—To these dates we request attention, merely to show that, even on the supposition of Higden being the writer of these dramas, there is a *possibility*, at least, of connecting him with the year 1269. But it is more probable that he was only *one* of the writers; that *his* portion of the dramas was written and represented at a later period; and that, on account of his name being more celebrated than the rest, tradition ascribed to him the composition of the whole. There is, in fact, mention of one "Henry Frances," (also professed in the same community,) who, in a MS. as old as the reign of of Henry VIII., is distinctly called the author, and who is not unreasonably thought by Pennant to have been a joint labourer with Higden. Whether, however, he preceded or followed Higden, would be a useless inquiry. In corroboration of the opinion that the author of the Polychronicon was not the *sole* writer of the Chester dramas, we may observe that they could not possibly be composed at one time, and for one occasion. The probability is, not only that a few of them existed *prior* to Higden's time, and that he made considerable additions to them, but that similar additions were made *after* him. The statement that "he was thrice at Rome before he could obtain leave of the pope to have them in the English tongue," confirms the hypothesis of his being the *chief* writer of the collection. From this statement, we may deduce another inference,—that such dramas had hitherto been written either in the Latin or the Norman French. Perhaps, too, it may legitimately sanction a third,—that these

very dramas, or at least a portion of them, previously existed in one of these languages; but then we are inclined to think that the *substance* only thus existed. In adapting any particular drama to the understanding of the English spectator, very important alterations, in regard alike to spirit as to form, would be indispensable. On the whole, we are more favourably disposed towards this theory than to any other. We are not, however, insensible to the reasons which have induced other writers to infer "that no ecclesiastic of this (Chester) abbey, who bore the name of Randal, was the author of these mysteries; and that, as Higden lived nearly contemporaneously with their first appearance, common fame in after times, without duly attending to dates, ascribed them to *him*." Let the reader choose the hypothesis which he may deem most reasonable. In either case, the object of this paragraph, viz. the antiquity of the dramas in question, is attained.

The Chester dramas are in number twenty-four, and the subjects are chiefly scriptural, with, however, a considerable mixture of apocryphal matter. Of these, two only, we believe, have yet been printed entire[1]; and even they may be said to be re-published, since the impression was confined to members of a small and exclusive society. Subjoined is a list of the subjects, and of the parties by whom they were represented.[2]

[1] The Deluge, and the Murder of the Innocents, both printed for the Roxburgh Club, by Mr Markland, who has prefixed to them an excellent dissertation on Miracle plays in general

[2] 1. De Cœli, Angelorum et Infernalium Spirituum Creatione. By the Tanners

2 Qualiter Deus docuit (creavit ?) Mundum By the Drapers.
3. De Deluvio Noe. By the Water drawers of the Dee.
4 De Abraham, Melchisedek et Lot. By the Barbers and Wax-chandlers
5. De Moysi et Lege sibi datâ. By the Hatters and Linen-drapers.
6. De Salutacione et Nativitate Salvatoris. By the Wrights
7. De Pastoribus greges pascentibus. By the Painters.
8 De Tribus Regibus Orientalibus. By the Vintners.
9. De Oblatione Triam Regum. By the Mercers.
10 De Occisione Innocentium. By the Goldsmiths
11. De Purificatione Beatæ Virginis. By the Blacksmiths.
12. De Tentatione Salvatoris. By the Butchers.
13. De Chelidemo, et de Resurrectione Lazari. By the Glovers.
14 De Jesu intrante domum Symeonis Leprosi. By the Corvisors.
15. De Cœnâ Domini. By the Bakers.

The *Towneley* Series, also called the *Widkirk*, is written in a style of greater antiquity than the Chester: the MS. too, is, as we have before observed, considerably older, being referrible to the reign of Edward IV., or even to that of his predecessor. But, as we have before intimated, the more antiquated character of the style has little weight in the argument; and it only leads us to infer, that the Towneley series has not been so often transcribed, and consequently that the language has been less modernised. Unless that language were adapted to the oral speech of the time, it would never have been uttered to the ears of a multitude incapable of comprehending it. This modernisation, then, was indispensable, and the hand by which it was effected has frequently been confounded with that of the original author, or perhaps translator from some Latin or French source.

Where the plays constituting the Towneley series were originally performed, is matter of doubt. Though they are more usually known by the name of the family which has so long owned the only MS. copy of them known to exist, they are frequently called the *Widkirk*, from a tradition, that, prior to the dissolution of monasteries, they were exhibited in a house of that name. But there was no house of that name. There was, indeed, near Wakefield, a cell called *Woodkirk*, inhabited by Augustine friars, and dependent on the great house of St. Oswald at Nostel; and from this circumstance it has been inferred that Woodkirk is the place alluded to in the tradition; and this inference has been strengthened by other facts. In the first place, by a charter of king Henry I., two fairs were annually held at Woodkirk,—one at the Feast of the Assumption, the other on

16. { De Passione Christi. By the Fletchers, Bourgers, Coopers, &c.
De Crucifixione Christi. By the Ironmongers.
17. De Descensu Christi ad Inferos. By the Cooks.
18. De Resurrectione Christi. By the Skinners.
19. De Christo duobus Discipulis apparente. By the Saddlers.
20. De Ascensione Domini. By the Tailors.
21. De Electione Matthiæ. By the Fishmongers.
22. Ezekiel By the Clothiers.
23. De Adventu Antichristi. By the Dyers.
24. De Judicio Extremo. By the Websters.

the Nativity, of the Blessed Virgin.[1] Now at such places, and on such occasions, pageants were always exhibited to the assembled multitudes: indeed, our puppet-shows, our Merry Andrews and Clowns, and other personages, whose feats, garb, and grimaces form the chief entertainment at our rural fairs, derive their origin from the ancient mysteries. In the second place, some of the words, and two or three of the allusions, in the Towneley dramas, are said to be local, and to be perfectly intelligible, if not peculiar, to the inhabitants of the district surrounding Wakefield. All this evidence is certainly entitled to some weight; but we would not confidently affirm that *all* the dramas were exhibited in the same place, still less that all were written or transcribed by the same hand. We meet with several words, and with several allusions, that we believe peculiar to Lancashire. On this subject, however, we will not dwell. It is one on which the curious reader may satisfy himself, the whole of this series having recently been published by the Surtees Society.[2]

The sacred dramas anciently exhibited at Coventry, were as celebrated at least as either of the preceding, since they alone of the three appear to have attracted the notice of royalty. Thus, in 1416, Henry V.; in

[1] The charter is not before us; but we suspect there was only *one* annual fair — held from the Assumption (August 15) to St Mary's Nativity (Sept 8). It could not be the Nativity of *our Saviour*,—for December would never answer for *a fair*. We follow Mr. Hunter, the historian of Doncaster.

[2] Preface to "The Towneley Mysteries." 8vo. Nichols and Son. 1836. "The Towneley Mysteries" are in number thirty-two:—

Creatio.
Mactatio Abel.
Processus Noe cum Filiis.
Abraham.
Isaac.
Jacob.
Processus Prophetarum.
Pharao.
Cæsar Augustus.
Annunciatio.
Salutacio Elizabeth.
Prima Pagina Pastorum.
Secunda Pagina Pastorum.
Oblacio Magorum.
Fugacio Joseph et Mariæ in Ægyptum.
Magnus Herodes.
Purificacio Mariæ.
Pagina Doctorum.
Johannes Baptista.
Conspiracio et Capcio.
Coliphizatio.
Flagellacio
Processus Crucis. Crucifixio.
Processus Talentorum.
Extractio Animarum ab Inferno.
Resurrectio Domini.
Peregrini.
Thomas Indiæ.
Ascencio Domini.
Juditium.
Lazarus.
Suspentio Judæ.

1456, the brave queen Margaret; in 1464, Richard III.; two years afterwards Henry VII., visited this city for the purpose of witnessing them. Allusions to them may be found in some of our old writers.[1] Not only were the city companies, as in Chester, eager to vie with each other in the splendour with which they exhibited their respective dramas, but the monastery of Grey Friars was equally distinguished for these pageants. In the Cotton MSS. (Vespasian D. VIII.) there is a series of plays, which, if any faith is to be reposed in the statement of Dugdale, were the property of that community,

[1] Thus, in the Four Ps of Heywood:—

For as good hope would have it chaunce,
This devil and I were of olde acquaintance,
For oft, in the play of Corpus Christi,
We both play'd the devil at Coventrie.

It must not, however, be forgotten that such exhibitions, though much less celebrated, were perhaps as frequent at other towns,—at Newcastle-on-Tyne, York, Leeds, Kendal, Lancaster, Preston, Dublin, Edinburgh, &c., as may be seen in our local historians. London was, of course, superior in this respect to all of them.

London.

"Richard Marlow was Lord Mayor in 1409, in whose Maioraltie there was a Play at Skinner's Hall (saith Sterne), to hear which most of the greatest Estates of England were present." (*Weever's Funeral Monuments*).

York.

For an account of the pageants once exhibited by the Trades in this city on the great festival of *Corpus Christi*, see *Drake's Eboracum*, Appendices, 29. 32.

Leeds.

Also exhibited by the Trades. See Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis.*

Dublin.

Adam and Eve were represented by the Glovers; Cain and Abel by the Cervisers; Noah and his family by the Mariners and Vintners; Abraham and Isaac by the Weavers; Pharaoh and his host by the Smiths; the Chidren of Israel in the Desert by the Skinners; the Three Kings by the Goldsmiths; the Shepherds by the Hoopers; Pilate and his fellowship by the Tailors; Anna and Caiaphas by the Barbers; the Apostles by the Fishermen; the Prophets by the Merchants; the Tormentors by the Butchers. Not the least curious feature of these performances was, that the Scripture personages were clad in the costume of each gild or fraternity. (*Harris's Dublin*, p. 143, &c.)

Edinburgh.

1554, Oct. 12. "The provosts, baillies, and counsale ordains the thesaurer Robert Grahame to content and pay to Walter Byrnyng the somme of £v. for the making of the play-ground, and peinting of the handsenye: and the playeris's facis, quhill beand payit, providand always that the said Walter mak yeir underwrittin furth-cummend to the terme quhen thai haif ado therewith, quhilkis he has now ressavit; viz. viii playhattis, an kingis croun, ane myter, ane fulis hude, ane foxis, ane pair angel-wingis, twa angel hair, ane chaplet of tryumphe." (*Dalzel's Scotish Poems*, p. 32.)

To these and other authorities, our attention has been drawn by Mr. Sharp, *Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries*, p. 141.

and were exhibited by them. They are entitled *Ludus Coventriæ;* and, if we consider the extraordinary diligence of that antiquary, aud his intimate connection with the city, we shall not readily dissent from so high an authority. Add that the dramas in question certainly formed no part of the entertainments exhibited by the trading companies of Coventry, and we have some confirmation to the statement. Whoever may have been the former proprietors of these dramas, the MS. which contains them is no less ancient than the Towneley. The subjects are for the most part identical with those of the two preceding series, but more numerous[1]; and the manner of treating them is, in all these three, so similar, that no doubt can possibly be entertained of their being derived from one common source. Dugdale speaks of the sensation which the pageants of the friars produced on the great festival of *Corpus Christi:* these, "being acted with mighty state and reverence by the Friars of this house, had theaters for the severall scenes, very large and high, placed upon wheels, and drawn to all the eminent parts of the city, for the better advantage of spectators." "I have been told by some old people, who in their younger years were eye-witnesses of these

[1] 1. The Creation.
2. The Fall of Man.
3. The Death of Abel.
4. Noah's Flood.
5. Abraham's Sacrifice.
6. Moses and the Two Tables.
7. The Genealogy of Christ.
8. Anna's Pregnancy.
9. St Mary in the Temple.
10. Her Betrothment.
11. The Salutation and Conception.
12. Joseph's Return.
13. Visit to Elizabeth.
14. Trial of Joseph and Mary.
15. Birth of Christ.
16. The Shepherds' Offering.
17. Wanting
18. Adoration of the Magi.
19. The Purification.
20. Slaughter of the Innocents.
21. Christ in the Temple.
22. His Baptism.
23. His Temptation.
24. The Woman taken in Adultery.
25. Lazarus.
26. Council of the Jews.
27. Mary Magdalen.
28. Christ betrayed.
29. Herod.
30. The Trial of Christ.
31. The Dream of Pilate's Wife.
32. The Crucifixion.
33. The Descent into Hell.
34. Sealing of the Tomb.
35. The Resurrection.
36. The Three Maries.
37. Christ appearing to Mary Magdalen.
38. The Pilgrim of Emaus.
39. The Ascension.
40. Descent of the Holy Ghost.
41. The Assumption.
42. Doomsday.

It is curious to us how minute the Coventry friars were — always supposing they were the devisers of these pageants — in detailing the most important passages of Our Saviour's life.

pageants so acted, that the yearly confluence of people to see that show was extraordinary great, and yielded no small advantage to this city." None of the dramas from the *Ludus Coventriæ* have hitherto been published.[1]

Whatever might be the celebrity of the spectacles given by these ecclesiastics, it is certain that those of the Trading Companies, and incorporated Gilds of Coventry were not inferior. Their written dramas, indeed, have perished, with the exception to one which we shall hereafter notice, — that exhibited by the *Shearmen and Tailors*. But from the records of these bodies, most of which are still extant, some very curious particulars might be derived. Thus, in the account of expenditure by the *Smiths'* Company, we have some items strange enough to modern ears, but certainly never dictated by irreverence: —

"God's coat of white leather (6 skins).
"Cheverel (chevelure, peruke) for God.
"Girdle for God.
"Paid to God 2*s*.
"Item to Herod, 3*s*. 4*d*.
"Item to Pilatt is wyffe, 2*s*.
"Item to the devyll and to Judas, 18*d*.

are among the entries. Those of the *Cappers* are not less remarkable:

"Item, payd to Pylate, 4*d*.
"Item, payd to the 4 knights, 4*s*. 8*d*.
"Item, payd to the 2 bysshopes, 2*s*.
"Item, payd to God, 20*d*.
"Item, paide to the Sprytt of God, 16*d*.
"Item, payd to the two Angelles, 8*d*.
"Item, payd to the 3 Maryes, 2*s*.
"Item, payd to the Demon, 16*d*.

From the three collections we have noticed we proceed to make a few such extracts as may best illustrate the subject of the Miracle plays.

[1] Payne Collier's Annals of the Stage, vol. ii.; Sharp's Dissertation; Dugdale's Warwickshire, and the writers above cited.

The dramas founded on the Old Testament exhibit some strange additions to the sacred text. The pride of Lucifer, who presumed to sit on the throne of the Highest, and to claim worship from universal heaven, is described with a ludicrous simplicity.—Thus in the Chester Mystery on this subject, he says:

"Above grete God I will me guyde,
And set myself here, as I wene
I am pereles, and prince of pryde;
For God himself shynes not so sheene.

"Here will I sit now in his sted,
To exalt myselfe in this same sea[1]
Behold my body, both hand and head;
The might of God is marked in me!

"All angelles turne to me, I redd[2],
And to your soveraigne knele on your knee!
I am your Comfort, both Lord and Head,
The myrth and the might of the Majesty!"

Suiting the action to the word, he ascends the throne of God, and swears,

"Thoughe God come here I will not hence,
But sit right here before his face."

The Almighty soon returns, and the vain blusterer, with all his companions and worshippers, falls, through the virtue of a single word, into hell.[3]

In the Towneley drama on the same subject, though the language is different, the manner is the same.

[*Here God leaves his throne, and Lucifer sits on it.*]

"*Lucifer.*
"Certes, it is a semely sight
Syn that we ar alle angels bright,
And ever in blis to be;
If that ye wille behold me right,
This mastre longes to me.

[1] Seat, throne. [2] Say.
[3] Harleian MSS. No. 2013.

I am so fare and bright,
Of me commys alle this light,
This gam and alle this gle;
Agans my grete myght
May thing stand then be.
And ye welle me behold
I am a thowsand fold
Brighter then is the son,
My strengthe may not be told,
My myght may no thing kon;
In heven, therfor, wit I wold
Above me who should won.
For I am lord of blis,
Over alle this warld, i-wis,
My myrth is most of alle;
Therefor my wille is this,
Master ye shalle me calle.
And ye shalle se, fulle sone anone,
How that me semys to sit in trone
As king of blis;
I am so semely, blode and bone,
My sete shall be there as was his.
Say, felows, how semys now me
To sit in seyte of trynyty?
I am so bright of ich a lym
I trow me seme as welle as hym."

The sacrifice of Cain and Abel, and the first murder perpetrated in this our world, are related with a freedom that must surprise, with an irreverence that must offend us. The two brothers having agreed to sacrifice, — Abel his living animals, Cain the fruits of the earth, the latter in the Chester pageant says: —

" I am the elder of us two,
Therefore first I will goe.
Such as the fruite is fallen fro
Is good enough for Him.
This corne standing, as mot I thee [1],
Was eaten with beaste, as men may se.
God! thou gets non other of me,
Be thou never so grim!

[1] So tell I thee.

"Hitt[1] were pittye, by my penne[2],
This eared corne for to bren:
Therfore the divill hang me than,
And He of this get ought!"[3]

The same scene is described with greater diversity, and, if possible, with greater profaneness, in the Towneley pageant, which abounds too with far grosser phrases. Cain is ploughing with his man Garcia; they quarrel, and are stripping to fight, when Abel arrives, and is cursed for his intrusion:

"Thou should have bide til thou were cald.
Come nar, and other drife or hald[4]
And kys the devillis toute!
Go grese thi shepe under the toute,
For that is the most lefe!"[5][6]

Abel answers with mildness, and exhorts his brother to accompany him, and join him in sacrificing to God. The other, after swearing as usual, asks—

"Shold I leife my plough and alle thyng
And go with the to make offeryng?
Nay! thou fyndes me not so mad!
Go to the deville, and say I bad!"[7]

After some good round abuse of God and providence, Cain is at length induced to offer his corn; but he selects that which is blighted, grumbles at every sheaf which he lays on the altar, and indulges in expressions too coarse to be transcribed. He swears that he will offer God no more of that which has cost him such pains to sow, reap, and stack. Abel exhorts him to devotion:

"*Cayn.*
"The deville hang the bi the neck!
How that I teynd never thou rek[8],

[1] It.
[2] By my penalty — by any punishment I should deserve if I spoke not truly and wisely.
[3] Harleian MSS. No. 2013. Drama 2.
[4] And either drive or hold.
[5] For that is the most agreeable to thee.
[6] Towneley Mysteries, p. 9.
[7] "Go to hell, and say that Richard sent thee!"
[8] How *I* offer, never mind thou!

Wille thou not yit hold thi peasse?
Of this janglyng I reyde thou seasse![1]
And teynd I welle, or teynd I ille,
Bere the even, and speke bot skille!"[2]

As might be expected, Cain's offering will not burn; the smoke nearly suffocates him; he blows, swears, and cries —

"Now bren, in the devyllis name![3]
A! what deville of helle is it?

The smoke and stink increase until Cain wishes the sheaf, the fire, and the smoke, in his brother's throat. Here the Almighty interposes, advises him to peace with Abel, and promises to reward him if he "does well." Cain stares around him, wonders where the voice comes from:

"Whi, who is that Hobbe over the walle?
We, who was that that piped so small?"

The licentious language of this drama, in both the series, will dispose the reader to reflection; and may induce him to infer that "the good old times" were not quite so pure as we generally suppose.

The Deluge, with the adventures of Noah, his sons and wife, was one of the most popular of the pageants exhibited for the edification of our ancestors. Its celebrity, as we have already observed, is attested by Chaucer, and allusions to it are nearly as common in our old writers as to the reign of Herod. For this reason we give the piece entire from the Chester series.

The drama opens with a soliloquy by the Deity, who inveighs against the wickedness of mankind, and asserts his resolution of destroying them all except Noah and his family. He is minute in his directions as to the construction of the ark:

[1] I tell thee to cease thy prate!
[2] Be thou quiet, and speak to the purpose!
[3] Now burn, in twenty devils' name!

"*Deus.*

"A[1] God that all the World have wrought,
Heaven, Earth, and all of nought,
I see my people, in deede and thought,
Are fowle rotted in synne.

"My Ghost shall not lenge in man,
That through fleshlie liking is my fone:
But till vi skore yeares be gone,
To loke if they will blynne.[2]

"Manne that I made I will destroy;
Beast, worme, and fowle to flie:
For on earthe they doe me noye,
The folke y[t] is thereon.

"For it harmes me so hartfullie
The malyce now that can multeply,
That sore me greves, inwardlie,
That ever I made manne.

"Therefore Noe, my servant free,
That righteous man art, as I see,
A shipp sone thou shalt make the,
Of trees drye and light.

"Little chambers therein thou make,
And bynding slich also thou take
W[t]hin and out, thou ne slake
To anoynte it through all thy might.

"300 Cubytes it shall be longe,
And so of breadeth, to make it strong,
Of heighte so, the mest thou fonge[3]
Thus measure it about.

"One Window worch through thy might,
One cubyte of length and breadeth make
Upon the syde a dore shall fit,
For to come in and out.

"Eatinge places thou make also
Three rowfed chambers one or two
For w[th] water I thinke to stowe
Man that I can make.

[1] *A* and *I* are conversive in our old mysteries
[2] Blynne, *v.* to cease, to desist, *i. e.* from their iniquity.
[3] Fonge, fang, *v.* to surround, secure.

"Destroyed all the World shall be,
Save thou, thy Wife, thy sonnes thre.
And all their Wives, also, w[th] thee.
Shall saved be for thy sake."

Of course the patriarch expresses his gratitude, and directs his three sons to hasten their preparations for the building of the ark. All three boast of the excellence of their tools in a manner characteristic enough of the rude period when this drama was composed:

"*Noe.*

"Ah Lord! I thanke the, lowd and still[1],
That to me art in such will;
And spares me and my house to spill[2]
As now I sothlie fynd.

"Thy bydding, Lord, I shall fulfill,
And never more the greeve ne grill,
That suche grace has sent me till
Among all mankinde.

"Have done yow men and women all;
Helpe, for ought that may befall,
To worke this shipp, chamber and hall,
As God hath bydden vs doe.

"*Sem.*

"Father, I am already bowne,
Anne axe I have, by my crowne!
As sharpe as any in all this towne,
For to go thereto.

"*Ham.*

"I have a hatchet, wonder kene,
To byte well, as may be seene,
A better grownden, as I wene,
Is not in all this towne.

"*Japhet.*

"And I can well make a pyn,
And w[th] this hammer knocke yt in;
Goe and worche, w[t]hout more dyme,
And I am ready bowne."

[1] *Lowd and still—always.* Percy.
[2] To spill, *v.* destroy.

The ladies are resolved to do what *they* can towards the common object.

"*Vxor Noe.*

"And we shall bring tymber, to,
For women nothing els doe;
Women be weake to undergoe
Any great travayle.[1]

"*Vxor Sem.*

"Here is a good hackstocke;
On this you must hew and knoch:
Shall non be idle in this flocke,
Ne now may no man fayle.

"*Vxor Ham.*

"And I will goe to gather slicke,
The ship for to cleane and piche
Anoynted it must be, every stich,
Board, tree, and pyn.

"*Vxor Japhet.*

"And I will gather chippes here
To make a fire for yow, in feere,
And for to dight yo^r dynner,
Against yow come in.

["*Tunc faciunt signa quasi laborarent cu diversis instrumentis.*"[2]]

There is something like description in the four stanzas that follow. One of the unities, however, that of time, is little observed, for in these stanzas the vessel is begun, continued, and ended.

"*Noe.*

"Now, in the name of God, I will begin
To make the shippe that we shall In,
That we be ready for to swym
At the coming of the floode.

"These burdes I joyne together,
To keep vs safe from the wedder,
That we may rome both hither and thider
And safe be from this floode.

1 Transayle, *s.* business, affair
2 Then the actors shall appear to be working with various instruments.

" Of this tree will I have the mast,
Tyde w[th] gables [1] that will last ;
W[th] a sayle yarde for each blaste,
And each thing in the kinde.

" With topeas he [2] and bew sprytt,
W[th] coardes and ropes I hold all meete
To sayle forth at the next weete.[3]
This shipp is at an ende."

But the most difficult part of Noah's labour is yet to come; he has to persuade his wife, who unaccountably enough demurs at seeing herself, to enter the vessel. The following dialogue was evidently made to divert the spectators; and it confirms what we read in the " Banes," or Prologue, to the series, that some things were introduced for this special purpose, not warranted by any record of Scripture.

" *Noe.*

" Wife, in this castle we shall be keped ;
My childer and thou I wold in leaped [4]

" *Vxor Noe.*

" In faith noe I had as lief thou had slepped, for all thy frankishfare [5],
For I will not doe after thy red.[6]

" *Noe.*

" Good Wife doe as I the bydd.

" *Vxor Noe.*

" By Christ not, or I see more neede,
Though thou stand all the day and rave.

[1] Gable, *s* a support, fastening.
[2] Topeas he, topmast high.
[3] Weete, *s.* wet. The next tide is meant here.

[4] " This moonke, moonke-like in Scriptures well seene,
In storyes travilled with the best sorte ;
In pagentes set fourth, apparently to all eyne,
The Olde and Newe Testament with livelye comforte ;
Interminglinge there with, onely to make sporte,
Some things not warranted by any writt,
Which to gladd the hearers he would men to take yt."
Harleian MSS 2013. stanza 2.

[5] Frankishfare, *query*, nonsense.
[6] Red, rad, advice.

"*Noe.*

"Lord, that women be crabbed aye!
And never are meke, that dare I saye.
This is well sene by me to-daye,
In witness of you each one.

Good wife, let be all this beere
That thou makes in this place here,
For all they wene thou art master;
And so thou art, by St. John!"

This altercation is suspended by the voice of the Deity, who commands the patriarch to collect the beasts of the earth, and fowls of the air, whether clean or unclean, two by two, and also a sufficient quantity of provisions, announcing the approaching flood.

"*Deus.*

"Noe, take thou thy meanye,
And in the shippe hye that you be,
For none so righteous man to me
Is now on earth lyvinge.

"Of cleane beastes w^th^ thee thou take
Seaven and seaven, or thou slake,
Hee and shee make to make [1]
Belyve [2] in that thou bringe.

"Of beastes uncleane two and two,
Male and female, without moe;
Of cleane fowles seaven alsoe,
The hee and shee together.

"Of fowles uncleane two, and no more;
Of beastes as I said before:
That shall be saved throughe my lore[3],
Against I send the wedder.

"Of all meates that must be eaten
Into the ship loke there be getten,
For that no way may be foryeten,
And doe all this by deene.[4]

[1] Make to make, like to like, mate to mate.
[2] Belyve, quickly, immediately, anon.
[3] Lore, *s.* direction, command.
[4] By deene, bedene, in a short time, immediately.

"To sustayne man and beastes therein,
Aye, till the waters cease and blyn.
This world is filled full of synne;
And that is now well sene.

"Seaven dayes be yet cominge
You shall have space them into bringe;
After that, it is my lyking
Mankinde for to noye.

"Forty dayes and forty nightes,
Rayne shall fall for their unrightes,
And that I have made through my mighte;
Now thinke I to destroye."

Accordingly Noah repeats his gratitude to his benefactor, and issues the necessary command to his children.

"*Noe.*

"Lord, at youre byddinge I am bayne,
Sith non other grace will gayne,
Hit will I fulfill fayne,
For gracious I thee fynde.

"A hundred wynters and twenty
This shipp making tarried have I:
If, through amendment, any mercye
Wolde fall vnto mankinde.

"Have done, you men and women all;
Hye you, lest this water fall,
That each beast were in his stall
And into ship broughte.

"Of cleane beastes seaven shall be,
Of vncleane two; this God bade me;
This floode is nye well may we see,
Therefore tary you noughte."

These all enter the ark except the wife of Noah, who still persists in remaining without. In the stage direction the sons of Noah are enjoined to mention aloud the names of the animals which enter; and a representation of which, painted on parchment, is to be carried by the actors. And the bearers of these re-

presentations are enjoined to imitate the natural tone of each animal.

The animals are now collected, and safely lodged in the ark: the catalogue, by Noah's sons, his wife, and his daughters-in-law, in succession, is here given with some humour.

"*Sem.*

"Syrr, here are lyons, libardes in,
Horses, mares, oxen, and swyne,
Goates, calves, sheepe, and kine,
Here sitten thou may see.

"*Ham.*

"Camels, asses, men may finde,
Buck, doe, harte, and hynde,
And beastes of all manner kinde,
Here bene, as thinckes mee.

"*Japhet.*

"Take here cattes and doggs to,
Otter, fox, fulmart also;
Hares, hopping gaylie, can yee
Have cowle [1] here for to eate.

"*Vxor Noe.*

"And here are beares, wolfes sett,
Apes, owles, marmoset;
Weesells, squirrles, and ferret,
Here they eaten their meate.

"*Vxor Sem.*

"Yet more beastes are in this house!
Here cattes maken in full crowse;
Here a ratten, here a mouse,
They stand nye together.

"*Vxor Ham.*

"And here are fowles les and more,
Hearnes, cranes, and byttour,
Swans, peacocks, have them before!
Meate for this wedder.

[1] Cowle, *s.* colewort, cabbage.

"Vxor Japhet.

"Here are cocks, kites, crowes,
Rookes, ravens, many rowes;
Cuckoes, curlewes, whoso knows,
Each one in his kinde.

"And here are doves, diggs, drakes,
Redshankes, running through y[e] lakes,
And each fowle that ledden[1] makes,
In this shipp men may finde."

But if all the other animals are thus carefully placed, there is one more obstinate than they, — the shrewish old wife, who still persists in her refusal to enter.

"Noe.

"Wife, come in, why standes thou there?
Thou art ever forward, that dare I sweare:
Come on gods half, tyme y[t] were,
For feare lest that we drowne.

"Vxor Noe.

"Yea Syr, set vp yo[r] sayle,
And rowe forth w[th] evill heale,
For, w[t]hout any fayle,
I will not out of this towne.

"But I have my gossips everichan,
One foote further I will not gone;
They shall not drowne, by St. John!
And I may save their lyfe.

"They loved me full well, by Christ!
But thou wilt let them in thy chist,
Els rowe forth, Noe, whither thou list,
And get thee a new wife.

"Noe.

"Sem, some loe[2] thy mother is wraw[3];
Forsooth, such another I do not know!

"Sem.

"Father, I shall sett her in, I trow,
Without any fayle.

[1] Ledden, *s* language. "Each fowle that *ledden* makes." i. e. every bird that may be taught to speak.
[2] Loe, think.
[3] Wraw, *adj* obstinate, mad, perverse.

" Mother, my father after thee send,
And bydds thee into yonder ship wend:
Loke up and se the wynde,
For we be ready to sayle.

" *Vxor Noe.*

" Sonne, goe againe to him, and say,
I will not come therein to-daye!

" *Noe.*

" Come in, wife, in twenty devills waye;
Or else stand w[t]hout.

" *Ham.*

" Shall we all fetche her in?

" *Noe.*

" Yea, sonnes, in Christ's blessinge and myne,
I wolde you hyde[1] you betyme,
For of this flood I am in doubte.[2]

" *Japhet.*

" Mother, we pray you altogether,
For we are here, yo[r] childer,
Come into the ship for feare of the wedder,
For his love that you boughte.

" *Vxor Noe.*

" That will I not for yo[r] call,
But[3] if I have my gossips all.

" *Gossip.*

" The flood comes in full fleetinge fast,
On every side it breadeth in hast;
For feare of drowning I am agast:
Good gossip, let me come in!

" Or let vs drincke, or we depart,
For often tymes we have done soe';
For at a time thou drinckes a quarte,
And so will I or that I goe.

" *Sem.*

" In feyth, mother, yet you shall,
Whether you will or not!

[*Tunc ibit.*]

[1] Hyde, *i. e.* hied, moved, bestirred.
[2] I am in doubte, *i. e.* I am in dread.
[3] But, unless.

"*Noe.*
"Welcome, wife, into this boate!
[*Et dat alapam victa.*]
"*Vxor Noe.*
"And have thou that for thy mote!

"*Noe.*
"Aha! marry this is hote!
It is good to be still."

Thus, when at length compelled to be saved, she must so far indulge her woman-will as to strike the author of the compulsion. This conduct of hers, devised to make "gode disporte" for the spectators, must recal to the memory of every reader of Chaucer the question of Nicholas in the Miller's Tale.[2] After this complaint, the patriarch notices the progress of the flood.

"A childer! methinkes this boate removes!
Our tarrying here hugelic me greves!

"Over the lande the water spredes!
God doe as he will!

"Ah, great God! thou art so good!
Now all this world is on a flood!
As I see well in sighte.
This window will I steake anon,
And into my chamber will I gone,
Till this water, so greate one,
Be slaked throughe thy mighte."

In the stage directions Noah is now to shut the windows of the ark, and retire for a short time. He is then to chaunt the psalm, *Salve mi, Domine!* and afterwards to open them and look out.

[1] Mote, speaking, haranguing.
[2] "'Hast thou not heard how saved was Noe,
When that our Lord had warned him befoure,
That all the world with water should be loure?'
'Yes,' quod the carpenter, 'ful yore ago!'
'Hast thou not heard,' quod Nicholas, 'also,
The sonne of Noe with his felowship,
Or that he might get his wife to ship?
Him had he lever, I dare wel undertake,
At thilke time, than all his wethers blake,
That she had had a ship hireself alone.'"

"Now forty dayes are fullie gone,
Send a raven I will anone;
If aught were earth, tree, or stone,
Be drye in any place.

"And if this fowle come not againe,
Is is a signe, soth to sayne,
That drye it is on hill or playne,
And God hath done some grace."

A raven is now despatched; and, as it does not return, a dove is to be sent after it.

"Ah Lord! wherever this raven lie,
Somewhere is drye well I see;
But yet a dove, by my lewtye[1],
After I will sende.

"Thou wilt turn againe to me,
For of all fowles that may flye
Thou art most meke and hend."[2]

The dove is accordingly released; and the stage direction enjoins that another shall be ready with an olive branch in its mouth, which must be dropt, by means of a cord, into the hand of Noah.

"Ah, Lord! blessed be thou aye,
That me hast comfort thus to-day!
By this sight, I may well saye,
This flood beginnes to cease.

"My sweete doue to me brought hase
A branck of olyue from some place;
This betokeneth God has done vs some grace,
And is a signe of peace.

"Ah, Lord! honoured most thou be!
All earthe dryes now I see;
But yet tyll thou commande me
Hence will I not hye.

"All this water is alwaye,
Therefore, as sone as I maye
Sacryfice I shall doe in faye
To Thee devoutlye."

[1] Lewtye, lawty, *s.* fidelity, justice, honesty.
[2] Hend, *adj.* gentle.

The patriarch is not long in suspense; he receives the Divine command to leave the vessel, with his animals, two-legged and four-legged, to multiply and fill the earth. He must offer a sacrifice.

"*Deus.*

"Noe, take thy wife anone,
And thy children every one,
Out of the shippe thou shalt gone,
And they all with thee.

"Beastes, and all that can flie,
Out anon they shall hye,
On earth to grow and multeplye:
I will y^t yt be soe.

"*Noe.*

"Lord, I thank the, through thy might,
Thy bydding shall be done in hight,
And, as fast as I may dighte,
I will doe the honoure.

"And to thee offer sacrifice,
Therefore comes in all wise,
For of these beastes that bene hise
Offer I will this stower."

[*Tunc egrediens archâ cum tota familia sua accipiet animalia sua et volucres, et offeret ea et mactabit.*]

"Lord God, in majesty,
That such grace hast graunted me,
When all was borne safe to be,
Therefore now I am boune,

"My wife, my childer, my meanye,
With sacrifice to honoure thee
With beastes, fowles, as thou may see,
I offer here right sone."

The piece ends with a long and somewhat dull exhortation by the Deity.

Deus.

"Noe, to me thou arte full able,
And thy sacrifice acceptable,
For I have found thee true and stable,
On the now must I myn.

"Warry[1] earth will I no more,
That mans synne y^t greves sore,
For of youth manfull yore
Has byn enclyned to syne.

"You shall now grow and multeply,
And earth you edefie:
Each beast and fowle y^t may flie
Shall be afrayd for yow.

"And fishe in sea y^r may flytte
Shall susteyne yow — I yow behite[2]
To eate of them yow ne lett
That cleane bene you may knowe.

"There as you have eaten before
Grasse and rootes, sith you were bore,
Of cleane beastes, les and more,
I geve you leave to eate.

"Safe bloode and fishe bothe in feare
Of wrong dead carren that is here,
Eates not of that in no manere,
For that aye you shall let.

"Manslaughter also you shall flee,
For that is not pleasant to me,
That shedes bloode, he or shee,
Ought where[3] amonge mankinde:

"That shedes blood, his blood shall be,
And vengence haue, that men shall se;
Therefore now beware now all yee
You fall not in that synne.

"And forwarde now with yow I make,
And all thy seede, for thy sake,
Of suche vengeance for to slake,
For now I have my will.

"Here I behet thee a beaste (behest),[4]
That man, woman, fowle, ne beaste,
With water, while the world shall last,
I will no more spill.

[1] Wary, warry, *v.* to ban, curse, &c.
[2] Behite, promise, allow.
[3] Ought where, *any where.*
[4] Here I behet thee a behest, — I establish my covenant with you. — *Gen.* IX. 9.

"My bowe betwene you and me
In the firmament shall bee,
By verey tokens, that you may see,
That such vengeance shall cease.

"That man ne woman shall never more,
Be wasted by water, as is before,
But for syn, that greveth sore,
Therefore this vengeance was.

"Where cloudes in the welkin bene,
That ilke[1] bowe shall be sene,
In tokennge that my wrath or tene,[2]
Shold never this wroken be.

"The stringe is turned toward you,
And toward me bend is the bowe,
That such wedder shall never showe,
And this behet I thee.

"My blessinge now I geve the here,
To thee, Noe, my servant dere,
For vengeance shall no more appeare;
And now farewell, my darling deere!"

But the dramas founded on the *New* Testament are those which most deeply characterize the period. Several, in the three series, relate to the events preceding and following the birth of Our Saviour; and they are remarkable for two things — for a grotesque adaptation of modern names and circumstances to antiquity, and for freedom of allusion to the holiest transactions.— Joseph is an old man, and he has no wish to marry so young a bride as St. Mary: "So may I thrive if I ever heard of any good luck in such a marriage." It is, however, divinely appointed, and he submits to the yoke. But he has not much of this world's substance, and he is forced to leave home *in search of work*. He is absent several months, and on his return he has the

[1] Ilke, same. [2] Tene, anger.

consolation of finding his youthful wife pregnant. He breaks out with the loudest lamentations; declares that he shall be called a cuckold by every body; and curses his fate with ludicrous earnestness, until an angel descends to explain the mystery to him.[1]

The dramas respecting the nativity of Our Saviour were doubtless performed with most pomp, and were most acceptable to the spectators. No less a personage than Augustus the emperor leads the Towneley plays on this subject. He threatens the spectators, swearing "by Mahowne," that if they make the least noise during the representation of the piece, — if they are not "still as stone," — he will behead them all. He then dwells on his own perfections.

"Cesar August I am cald;
A fayrer cors for to behold
Is not of bloode and bone."

But on consulting with his counsellors he learns that all his beauty and all his power are likely to avail him little; that a "May" should arise and bear a son destined to usurp his sceptre. He swears, however, that

"He shalle never destroy my lawes,
Were he the dwylle of helle."

The conclusion is that the child shall be sought, and if found put to death.[2]

If Cesar has need to be alarmed at "the ancient prophecy," so has king Herod. The dramas in which this personage is made to appear are by far the most ludicrous of the series. His extravagant rage, his furious bombast, were exceedingly agreeable to our ancestors; and gave rise to the proverb, "He out-Herod's Herod!" We cannot, however, find room for them in the text; but as

[1] See Hone's Ancient Mysteries, and the Towneley Mysteries, recently published.
[2] Towneley Mysteries, p. 66.

the subject requires more illustration than we can give it in the present plan, we refer the more curious reader to the Appendix.[1]

There is one drama, however, so curious and so important, that we cannot refrain from giving it entire. It is that of Antichrist, and has never yet been printed.

This remarkable drama, — remarkable no less for its boldness than for its manner of treating the subject, — is taken from the Chester MS. in the Harleian collection, No. 2013. It opens with monkish verses by *Antichrist.*

"De celso throno poli, pollens clarior sole,
Age vos monstrare, descendi vos judicare.
Reges et principes sunt subditi sub me venientes,
Sitis sapientes vos semper in me credentes,
Et faciam flentes gaudere et quod dolentes ;
Sic omnes gentes gaudebunt in me sperantes,
Descendo presens rex pius et perlustrator,
Principes eternus vocor Christus vester salvator."

Antichrist then boldly proclaims himself to be the long-promised Messias, and calls on all mankind to believe in him.

"1. All lordes in laude now belighte
That will be ruled throughout the righte,
Your savyour now, in your sighte.
Here may you safely see.

"2. Messias, Christe, and most of mighte,
That in the law was you beheight,[2]
All mankynde to joye, to dighte,[3]
Is comen, for I am hee.

"3. Of me was spoken, in prophesye
Of Moyses, David, and Esay ;
I am he the call Messy,
Forebyer[4] of Israell.

[1] See Appendix A.
[2] Beheight, promised.
[3] To dight, to prepare.
[4] Forebyer, Redeemer.

"4. Those that leeven [1] on me steadfastly
I shall them save from a noy;
And joy, righte as have I,
Wth them I think to deal."

The foregoing passage is sufficiently bold; but in the following Jesus Christ, the true Messias, is stigmatized as a false prophet, as the deceiver of men. The object of the author, indeed, is sufficiently clear,—to extol the true at the expense of the false redeemer; but yet we are not a little surprised that whatever might be the object, whatever the catastrophe of the piece, such language in such an age could be tolerated.

"5. But one hath ligged [2] me here in lande,
Jesu he hight, I understande;
To further falsehood he cane founde,
And farde with fantayse. [3]

"6. His wikednes he woulde not wounde[4],
Tell he was taken and put in bande,
And slayne throughe vertue of my sounde
This is soth seekerly.[6]

"7 My people of Jewes he could twayne,
That there lande came the never in;
Then one them now must I myne,
And restore them agayne.

"8. To buylde this temple will I not blyne[7],
As God honoured be therein,
And endlesse wayle [8] I shall them wyne [9],
All that to me bene bayne. [10]

[1] Leeven, *v.* believe.
[2] Ligged, lurked.
[3] And farde with fantasye — full of, loaded with, deceit
[4] Wounde — break, stop, cease.
[5] Sounde, *s.* voice, word.
[6] Soth seekerly, truth certainly.
[7] Plyne, to cease.
[8] Wayle, time.
[9] Wyne, to gain, get, secure.
[10] Bayne, *v. n.* to belong to, to be of kin to. Gaelic, *buin.* The word is not understood by the glossarist of Douglas, nor by Sibbald.

"9. One thinge me glades, be you boulde,
As Danyell the prophett before me tolde,
All women in worlde me love shoulde,
And there fayrenes to founde."

Antichrist is here represented as powerful in his influence: he has already great kings among his hearers, and he addresses them —

"10. What say you kings, that here bene lente?[1]
Are not my wordes at your assente?
That I am Christe omnipotente,
Leeve you not this eich one?"

These kings, who suffer under a foreign yoke, and who look for a temporal deliverer, are readily made to believe that the true Saviour has not yet appeared. But though inclined to recognize the new one, they naturally demand some proofs other than his own profrssions that he is the true Christ.

"*Primus Rex.*

"11. We leeven, Lorde, without let,
That Christ is not comen yet;
Yf thou be he, thou shal be set
In temple as God alone.

"*Secundus Rex.*

"12. Yf thou be Christ, called Messy,
That from our bale shall us lye,
Doe before us, masterye,
A signe that we may see.

"*Tercius Rex.*

"13. Then will I leeve that it is soe,
Yf thou doe wounders or thou goe;
Soe that thou save us from wo,
Then honoured shalte thou be.

"*Quartus Rex.*

"14. Houle[2] have we 'leeved many a yeare,
And of our weyninge many a weare;
And thou be Christe nowe comen here,
Then maye thou stynte all stryffe."

[1] Lente, tarrying.
[2] Houle, thou hast heard, thou knowest. Gaelic, *chuala*.

It is difficult to ascertain what could be the design of the author in assigning supernatural, nay, almighty power, to the impostor. In proof of his divine attributes, *Antichrist* declares that he will raise the dead; and he does raise them.

" *Antichristus.*

"15. That I am Christ, and Christe will be,
By verye signes you shall see;
For dead men through my postee [1]
Shall rise from death to life.

"16. Now will I torne all, through my mighte,
Trees downe, the rootes uprighte;
That is marwayl to your sighte,
That frute growing upon.

"17. Soe shall the groe and multiplye,
Through my might and my mastry;
I put you out of heresye,
Ty 'leeve me upon.

"18. And bodyes that bene dead and slayne,
Yf I may rayse them up agayne,
Then honour me with mighte and mayne,
Then shall no man you greeve.

"19. Forsoth, then, after will I dye,
And rise againe, throughe my postee [2];
Yf I maye doe this marvelously,
I red ye one me leeve.

"20. Men buryed in graves you maye see,
What mastery, is now hope ye
To rayse them up, through my postee,
And all through myne accorde.

"21. Whether I in my godhead be
By very signes you shall see:
Rise up, dead men, and honour me,
And know me for your Lorde.
[*Here the dead rise from their graves.*]

[1] Postee, poste, pouste, *s.* power, strength
[2] Power.

It is already manifest that *Antichrist* is to be considered as a prince of devils, for all those whom he evokes from the tombs are demons also—not the dead. Yet, to say the least of it, the idea of investing even the arch-devil with such attributes was a bold one: —

"*Primus Mortuus.*

"22. O lorde, to thee I aske mercye!
I was dead but nowe live:
Now wott I well and witterly [1],
That Christe is hether come.

"*Secundus Mortuus.*

"23. Hym honour we and all men,
Devoutly kneelinge one our ken [2];
Worshipped be thou there, amen!
Christ our name is comen."

Antichrist now may well boast of his divinity: but he appeals to apocryphal writers: —

"*Antichristus.*

"24. That I shall fulfill wholly wrytten,
You shall wott and knowe well it;
For I am wall, weale and wytt [3],
And lorde of every lande.

"25. And as the prophet, Sophany,
Speaketh of me, full witterly,
I shall rehearse readely,
That clearke shall understande."

Then follows a passage from the Book of Wisdom.

But the most fearless conception of the author is that in which he invests *Antichrist* with the tremendous power of deposing and of resuming life at plea-

[1] Witterly, verily, really, truly.

[2] Ken, knee; the orthography altered to make it rhyme. Γονυ, Greek; Genu, Latin; Glun, Gaelic.

[3] Wall, weal and wytt, infinity, felicity and wisdom.

"26. Now will I die that you shall see,
And rise againe, through my postee ; (power)
I will in grave that you put me,
And worshipp me alone.

"27. For in this temple a tombe is made,
There in my bodye shalbe layde ;
Then will I rise as I have sayde ;
Take teene [1] to me eich one.

"28. And after my resurreccion,
Then will I sit in greate renowne,
And my ghost send to you downe
In forme of fier, full soone.

"29. I dye! I dye! now ame I dead!"

The royal spectators are now filled with unwonted anxiety. They satisfy themselves by the best of all evidence, that of the senses, that he is really dead — will he rise again? If he do, how can any one refuse to believe in him? The scene is a daring one: —

"*Primus Rex.*

"30. Now, seyth this worthy lorde is dead,

"31. And his grave is w^th us leade,
To take his bodye, it is my read [2],
And bury it in a grave.

"*Secundus Rex.*

"32. For soth, and soe to us he sayde
In a tombe he woulde be layde ;
Now goe we forth all in abreade,
From disease he maye us save.
[*Then they pass over to Antichrist.*]

"*Tercius Rex.*

"33. Take we the bodye of this sweete
And bury it low under the greete [3] ;
Now lorde comforte us ! we thee beseeke !
And sende us of thy grace.

1 Take teene, *i. e.* take tent, take heed, attend.
2 Read, council, advice.
3 Greete, grit, gravel, earth.

"*Quartus Rex.*

"34. And yf he rise sone through his mighte [1],
From death to life, as he beheighte,
Hym will I honour, day and nighte,
As God in every place."

[*They now ascend from the tomb to the surface of the earth.*]

"*Primus Rex.*

"35. Now wott I well that he is dead,
For now in grave we have him layde;
Yf he rise, as he hath saide,
He is full of great mighte.

"*Secundus Rex.*

"36. I cannot 'leeve hym upon,
But yf he rise hym selfe alone,
As he hath sayde to many one,
And shew hym here in sighte.

"*Tercius Rex.*

"37. Tell that my savyour be risen againe,
In fayth my harte maye not be fayne,
Tell I hym see with joye.

"*Quartus Rex.*

"38. I must mourne with all my mayne,
Tell Christe be risen up agayne;
And of that mirrackle make us feigne,
Rise up, lorde, that we may see!"

[*Here Antichrist rises from the dead.*]

Thus *Antichrist* is invested with a power denied to every *created* being: he has, in his hands, the issues of life and death, and is superior lord over both! Throughout the whole range of miracle plays there is no blasphemy equal to this; and our surprise that such scenes and such language could be tolerated, is greatly augmented. Well might the four kings worship him.

"*Antichristus.*

"39. I rise, now reverence doe to me,
God gloryfyed created of degree,
Yf I be Christ, now 'leave you me
And worke after my wyse.

[1] Beheight, promised.

"*Primus Rex.*

"40. O lorde, welcome mayst thou be!
That thou art good now 'leeve we;
Therefore go sit up in thy see[1],
And keep our sacrifice."

[*Here they go over to Antichrist, and sacrifice to him.*]

"*Secundus Rex.*

"41. For soth in seat thou shalte be set,
And honoured with laude greate,
As Moyses law that lasteth yet,
As he hath saide before.

"*Tercius Rex.*

"42. O gracious lorde! goe siht downe then,
And we shall kneel upon our ken
And worshippe thee, as thyne owne men,
And worke after thy lorde.

[*Here Antichrist ascends the throne.*]

"*Quartus Rex.*

"43. Hether we be comen, with good intente,
To make our sacriffyce lorde exelente,
With this lambe that I have here hente[2],
Kneelinge thee before."

But the blasphemy of the piece has not yet reached its acme. In the country and time when the drama was composed, the bonds of ecclesiastical discipline must surely have been dissolved, or we should have been spared such language as the following. In Chester, where the drama was exhibited, there was, prior to Henry VIII., no *bishop*, — a fact which may account for this absence of control over the inferior clergy and people. The archbishops of York, indeed, prior to the Reformation, issued more than one inhibition against these pageants; but these dignitaries were distant: in a few years the mandate was always evaded; or it might be defied by the powerful earls of Chester, the patrons of such representations. No doubt the censures of the church were chiefly occasioned by such dramas as the present, and by such passages as the following: —

[1] See, seat, throne, residence.
[2] Hent, *v.* caught, seized, taken.

" *Antichristus.*

" 44. I Lorde, I God, I High Justice,
I Christ that made the dead to rise;
Here I receive your sacriffice,
And blesse you fleshe and fell.[1]

" 45. I will now sende my Holy Ghost,
You kinges also you I tell
To knowe me love, of mighte most
Of heaven, earth and hell."

[*Here his ghost descendes.*]

" *Severales Reges.*

" 46. A God, a Lorde, mickle of mighte,
This Holy Ghost is in us pighte[2];
Me thinkes my haste is very lighte
Seth it came into me.

" *Primus Rex.*

" 47. Lorde, we thee honour, day and night,
For thou shewest us, in sighte,
Right as Moses us beheighte,
Honoured must thou be."

Antichrist now exhibits his true character by the temporal rewards he bestows on his royal disciples. He shows by his gifts that " all the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them" were his. Those gifts, however, do not argue much geographical knowledge in him who made them.

" *Antichristus.*

" 48. Yet worthy workes, to your will,
Of phrophesye I shall fulfill,
As Danyell prophecyed untill
That landes should devyse.

" 49. You kings I shall advaunce you all,
And because your regions be but small.
Cities, castells, shall you befall,
With townes and towers gaye.

[1] Fell, skin, hide.
[1] Pighte, picht, fixed, settled, impressed upon.

"50. And the gyftes I shal be height
You shall have, as is good righte,
Hense or I goe out of your sighte,
Eich one shall knowe his dole.

"51. To thee I gyve Lomberdy;
And to thee Denmarke and Hongarye;
And take thou Ponthus and Italy;
And Rome it shal be thyne.

"*Secundus Rex.*

"52. Grante mercye Lorde, your gyfts to day,
Honour we will thee alwaye;
For we were never soe rich, in faye,
Nor non of all our kyne.

"*Antichristus.*

"53. Therefore, be true and stedfast aye,
And truely leeves on my law,
For I will harken one you to day,
Stydfast yf you I fynde."

This mode of conversion must have been powerful; and now it probably struck the author that if a stop were not put to the impostor's career, the true religion must be in sad jeopardy. But to arrest it, no human means would suffice; and two mighty prophets of ancient days—Enoch and Elijah—two who had never been subject to the common doom of humanity, whose virtues had rendered them the peculiar favourites of heaven, and whose miraculous powers had been amplified beyond those of all other men, are introduced to dispute the divine mission of Antichrist. Enoch prays for assistance from above, that the people whom the impostor has seduced, may be reclaimed from their misbelief. He applies the terms *shrew* and *thief* to his adversary in a manner highly decorous in one who had passed so many years in Paradise.

"*Enocke.*

"54. All mighty God, in majesty,
That made the heaven and earth to be,
Fier, water, stonne, and tree,
And man through thy mighte.

"55. The poyntes of thy privity,
Any earthly man to see,
Is impossible, as thinkes me,
Or any worldly wighte.

"56. Gracious Lorde that art soe good,
That who so longe in fleshe and bloude,
Hath granted life and heavenly food,
Let never our thought be defiled.

"57. But geve us, Lorde, mighte and mayne,
Or wee of this shrew be slayne,
To converte thy people againe
That he hath thus defiled.

"58. Synce first the worlde begane,
Through helpe of high heavenly Kinge,
I have lived in greete likeinge
In Parradiz w[t]out a noye.

"59. Tell we harde takeinge
Of this theefles cominge,
That now on earth is reigninge,
And doth Godes folkes destroye.

"60. To parradise taken I was that tyde,
This thefe's cominge to abyde,
And Hely [1] my brother here by syde
Was after sente to me.

"61. With this champion we must chide,
That now in worlde walketh wyde,
To disprove his pompe and pride,
And payer [2] all his postee."

Elijah is not behind his companion in the application of certain choice epithets; *devil incarnate, deceiver, liar,* &c.

"*Helyas.*

"62. O Lorde, that madest all thinge,
And longe hath lente us livinge,
Let never the devills power springe [3],
That man hath hym with in.

[1] Hely, Elias.
[2] Payer, to impair, lessen, diminish.
[3] To springe, here means, to flourish, succeed, prevail, endure.

"63. God, gyve you grace bouth oulde and younge,
To know deceate in his doinge,
That you may come to that likeinge
Of blys that never shall blyne.

"64. I warne you all men, witterly,
This is Enocke, I am Hely,
Bene comen his errours to destroy,
That he to you now shewes.

"65. He calles himself Christe and Messi,
He lyes, for soth, apertely[1];
He is the Devill, you to anoye,
And for non other hym knowe."

One of the kings is willing to hear what Enoch and Elijah have to say, because he is of the same *kin.* He must have been very learned in genealogical history to make out his pedigree.

"*Primus Rex.*
"66. Amen, what speake ye of Hely
And Enocke thé bene bouth in company,
Of our bloude the bene witterly,
And we bene of their kyne."

The fourth king expresses some doubt whether they are in reality the prophets of old. *Enoch* protests that they are; *Elijah* that they are ready to dispute with "this devil's limb."

"*Quartus Rex.*
"67. We readen in bookes of our law,
That they to heaven were drawe,
And yet bene there is the common sawe,
Wrytten as men in aye fynde."

"*Enocke.*
"68. We bene those men, for soth, I wrys,
Comen to tell you doe amysse,
And bringe your soules to heaven blisse,
Yf y[t] were any boote.

[1] Apertely, openly.

"*Helyas.*

"69. This devill's lyme that comen is,
That sayth heaven and earth is his
Nowe we be ready 'leeve you this?
Against him for to mote." [1]

Two of the kings, in the name of the rest, promise to follow the two prophets if they have the better of the contest. Enoch assures them of success; and exhorts them not to dread "the false fiend."

"*Primus Rex.*

"70. Yf that we here wytt mone
By profles [2] of disputacion
That you have skill and reason,
With you we will abyde.

"*Secundus Rex.*

"71. Yf your skills may doe hym downe,
To dye with you we will be boune,
In hope of salvacion
Whatsoever betyde.

"*Enocke.*

"72. To doe hym downe we shall assaye
Through mighte of Jesee, borne of a maye [3],
By righte and reason, as you shall say,
And that shall well here.

"73. And for that cause hether we be sente
By Jesu Christ, omnipotente,
And that you shall not albe shente [4],
He bought you all full deare.

"74. Be glade therefore and make good cheare, —
And I doe reade as I doe leare [5], —
For we be comen, in good mannere,
To save you, every one.

"75. And dreade you not for that false feynde;
For you shall see him cast behyde,
Or we departe, or from hym wynde,
And shame shall light hym one."

[*Here Enoch and Elijah shall pass over to Antichrist.*]

[1] To mote, to speak, to argue, *to moot*.
[2] Wytt mon by *profles*, know may by testimony, proof.
[3] Maye, maid, virgin, young woman.
[4] Shente, marred, damaged, ruined.
[5] Doe reade as I doe lear — advise as I am ins[tructed]

Now comes the "tug of war," but it is long a sea of words, — of words, too, that do not argue much for the politeness of these wondrous prophets, these celestial inhabitants; the *devil's limb* is evidently a favourite term of reproach.

"76. Saye, thou verye devill's lyme,
That sitts soe grysely and so gryme,
From hym thou came and shall to hym,
For many a soule thou deceives.

"77. Thou haste deceived men many a day,
And made the people to thy paye,
And bewiched them into a wronge waye,
Wickedly w^{th} thy wyles."

From the devil incarnate we may naturally expect scurrilous language; and we must admire the pluck which he shows in contending with adversaries so powerful. The author of this drama has made him a greater hero than ever entered into the conception of Milton. Dexterous as the two prophets are in the use of certain epithets, — they had lost sight of the record in St. James, that even Michael the archangel "durst not bring a railing accusation" against him, — they are wofully outdone by their antagonist.

"*Antichristus.*

"78. False features [1] from me you fley!
Ame not I most in majesty?
What men dare name them thus to me,
Or make such distaunce?

"*Helyas.*

"79. Fye one the feature! fye one thee!
The devill's owne nurry [2]!
Through hym thou preachest and haste posty [3]
A while, through sufferaunce.

[1] Features, deceivers.
[2] Nurry, nursling, child, offspring.
[3] Posty, power.

"*Antichristus.*

"80. O ye ypocrytes that soe cryen !
Lossells [1] lordens, soe lewdly lyen !
To spill my lawe, you spine !
That speach is good to spare.

"81. You that my true fayth defyne !
And needles my folke deiryne,
From hense hastely you hyne !
To you comes sorrow and care.

"*Enocke.*

"82. Thy sorrowe and care come one thy head !
For falsely, through thy wicked read,
Thy people is put to payne.
I woulde thy body were from thy head
Twenty myles from it lead,
Tell I brought yt againe.

"*Antichristus.*

"83. But I shall teach you curtesye,
Your sairjour to knowe anon in hye !
False theffes, w^th your heresye,
And yf you dare abyde —

"*Helyas.*

"84. Yes, for soth, for all thy pride,
Through grace of God all night,
Here we porpose for to abyde :
And all the worlde that is soe wyde
Shall wounder one thee one every syde
Sone in all mens sighte.

"*Antichristus.*

"85. Out one you theefles ! bouth two,
Eich man maye see you be soe,
Alby your ar raye,
Muffled in mantles non such I know,
I shall make you lowte full lowe,
Or I departe you froe,
To know me Lorde for aye.

[1] Lossels, liars, flatterers. Lordens, good for nothing fellows.

" *Enocke.*

"86. We be no theefles we thee tell,
Thou false feynde, comen from hell!
With thee we porpose for to mell[1],
My fellowe and I, in feare.[2]

"87. To knowe thy power and thy might,
As we these kings, have be height,
And there to we be ready dighte,
That all men nowe maye heare.

" *Antichristus.*

"88. My mighte is moste I tell to thee,
I died, I rose, through my postee.
That all these kings saw with there eye
And every man and wiff.

"89. And myrrackles, and marveyles, I did, also,
I consell you therefore both two
To worshipp me, and no moe,
And let us now no more stryve.

" *Helyas.*

"90. Thé were no myrrackles, but maweles[3] things,
That thou showest unto these kings,
Through thy feyndes crafte.

"91. And as the flower now springs
Fayleth fayth and heings,
So thy joye it reignes
That shalbe from thee rafte."

After this glorious bandying of the choicest compliments, perceiving that such a mode of proceeding was not likely to end the dispute, *Antichrist* calls on a "*thief*" present — a doctor learned in such matters — to speak for him. The poor doctor, who is the devil's disciple, is loth to deliver an opinion, but he is forced, and having paid suitable homage to the pseudo-deity, he councils him to curse and thereby to destroy his adversaries.

" *Antichristus.*

"92. Out one thee theefle that sitts soe still!
Why wylt thou not speake them till.

[1] To mell, to contend.
[2] In fear, in company, together.
[3] Maweless, unsubstantial, false.

"*Docter.*

"93. O lorde master, what shall I say then?

"*Antichristus.*

"94. I beshrew both thy . . . .
Arte thou now for to kene,
I fayth, I shall thee greeve.

"95. Of my Godhead I made thee wise,
And set thee ever at mickle price,
Now I would feele thy good advise,
And heare what thou woulde saye.

"96. These losells thé woulde me greeve,
And nothinge one me the wille 'leeve,
But ever be ready me to reprove,
And all the people of my law.

"*Docter.*

"97. O Lorde thou arte soe mickle of mighte,
Me thinke thou should mey chide no feight;
But curse them all, through thy mighte,
Then shall thé fare full yll.

"98. For those thou blesses the shall well speed,
And those thou curses the are but dead;
This is my consell and my read
Yender heretykes for to spill."

The advice is grateful to *Antichrist,* who proceeds to curse in a strain that would do honour to any churchman.

"*Antichristus.*

"99. The same I porposed, leave thou to me,
All things I know through my postee,
But yet thy wytt I thought to see
What was thy intente.

"Yt shall donne, right, witterly,
The sentence geven full openly
With my mouth truely
Upon them shall he bente.

"100. My curse I give you to amende
Your meales,
From your heade unto your heeles,
Walke you forth, in twenty deirlls way!

But cursing avails not, and the strife of words is resumed.

" *Enocke.*

"101. Yea thou shalt never come inclysse[1],
For falsely with thy wyles,
The people is put in payne.

" *Antichristus.*

"102. Out one you thee fles! why fare you this?
Whether had you rather have paine or bles
I may you save from all amysse.[2]

In his blasphemy, *Antichrist* becomes poetical.

"103. I made the day and eke the night,
And all things that is on earth growinge;
Flowers freshe that fayer can springe;
Also I made all other thinge —
The starres that be so brighte."

Old *Elijah* begins to rival the fiend in scurrility. It must be a great stretch of charity indeed that could speak a civil thing to the devil; but who could have expected such language from one that had passed a thousand years in heaven?

" *Helyas.*

"104. Thou lyest! vengeance on thee fall!
Out one thee, wretch! wroth thee I shall!
Thou callest thee kinge and lorde of all!
A feeynde is thee within!

"*Antichristus.*

"105. Thou lyest falsely, I thee tell!
Thou wylt be damned into hell!
I made thee man of fleshe and fell,
And all that is lyveinge.
For other godes have you now,
Therefore worshippe me alone
The w^ch hath made the water and stone,
And all at my lykeing.

[1] In clysse, query. *An cleas*, Gaelic, in the teat, *i. e.* in the right way. Or from κλεος, Greek; cliu, Gaelic, glory, reputation. I am very doubtful about this word.

[2] Amysse, evil, harm, hurt, danger.

"*Enocke.*

"106. For soth, thou lyest falsely;
Thou art a feynde comen to anoy,
Godes people that standeth us by!
In hell I woulde thou were!

"*Helyas.*

"107. Fye on thee fellow! fye on thee! Fye;
For all thy wichcrafte and sorcerye!
To mote with thee I am readye,
That all this people may here."

We are next entertained with a dispute on the Trinity, — a somewhat ticklish subject for such speakers.

"*Antichristus.*

"108. Out one you harlotts! whense come ye?
Where have you any other god but me?

"*Enocke.*

"109. Yes Christ, God in Trenity,
Thou false feature attaynte[1] —

"110. That sent his sonne from heaven see[2],
That for mankynde dyed one roode tree,
That shall soone make thee to flee,
Thou feature false and faynte!

"*Antichristus.*

"111. Rybbaldes ruled out of raye![3]
What is the Trinity for to say?

"*Helyas.*

"112. Three personesas thou 'leeve maye
In one Godhead in free.

"113. Father and Sonne, that is no ney,
And the Holy Ghost, styrringe aye,
That is one God verey,
Bene all three named here."

On this subject the words of *Antichrist* are so remarkable, that we can scarcely credit our eye-sight in perusing them. He ridicules, with more than infidel freedom, the notion of One God in Three; and stigma-

[1] Feature attynte, deceiver, traitor, attainted, corrupt, condemned.
[2] Heaven see, heaven's throne.
[3] Ruled out of raye, deprived of reason?

tises as madmen those who receive so absurd a dogma.— The dispute then continues in the old way, — not much to the advantage of the two prophets.

" *Antichristus.*

"114 Out one you theefles! what sayen yee?
Will ye have one God and Three?
How dare you soe saye?

"115. Madmen therefore 'leeve one me
That am one God, soe is not hee,
Then maye you live in joye and lee [1],
All this lande I dare laye.

" *Enocke.*

"116. Ney tyrante, understand thou this
Without begyninge his Godhead is,
And also without endinge is,
Thus fully 'leeven we.

"117. And thou that in-gendered was amysse,
Hast begyninge and noro this bliss,
An ende shall have, no dreade there is,
Full fowle as men shall see.

" *Antichristus.*

"118. Wreches gowles, you be blente ! [2]
Godes sonne I am, from hym sente !
How dare you maynteyne your intente,
Seith he and I be one?

"119. Have I not synce I came him froe,
Made the dead to rise and goe,
And to men I sent my ghoste alsoe
That leeved me upon.

" *Elyas.*

"120. Fye one thee, fellow ! fye one thee ! fye !
For through his might and his mastry,
By sufferaunce of God Almighty,
The people is blente through thee.

[1] Lee, pleasure, gladness.
[2] Wretched gulls ! you are blinded.

"119. Yf those men be raysed witterly,[1]
Without the devills fantasye,
Here shall be provyd perfectly,
That all men shall see.

" *Antichristus.*

"120. A fooles I red you leeve me upon,
To the people every eich one,
To put them out of doubte.

"121. Therefore I red you hastely,
Converted to me most mightely,—
I shall you save from anoye,
And that I ame aboute."

To end the contest, Enoch and Elijah desire to see some of the miraculous deeds on which he rests his claim to divinity. They wish to see the men whom he had before raised from the dead; to see them, too,— for a reason about to be explained, — eat and drink.

" *Enocke.*

"122. Now of thy myrrackles would I see.

" *Helyas.*

"123. Therefore comen hether bene we,
Doe what is thy great postee,
And soone thereof to leeve.

" *Antichristus.*

"124. Soone maye you see, yf you will abyde,
For I will neither feight ney chide;
Of all the world that is soe wyde
Therein is not my peace.

" *Enocke.*

"125. Bringe forth these men here in our sighte
That thou hast raysed against the right,
Yf thou be soe mickle of mighte
To make them eate and drinke,
For very god we will thee knowe,
Such a signe if thou wilt show,
And doe thee reverence one a row,
All at thy lykeinge."

[1] Witterly; the sense here is, really, verily.

Antichrist readily accepts the challenge; he evokes the dead, who promise to obey his commands in so far as they can.

"*Antichristus.*

"126. Wreches dampned al be yee,
But nought for that it falleth me,
As gracious God abydinge be,
Yf you will mende your life.
You dead men rise, through my postee:
Come eate and drinke that men maye see,
And prove me worthy of dyety,
Soe shall we stynte all stryffe.

"*Primus Mortuus.*

"127. Lorde, thy bydinge I will doe aye,
And for to eate I will assaye.

"*Secundus Mortuus.*

"128. And I will all that I maye
Will doe thy bydinge here."

Now the secret of *Antichrist*'s power is about to be discovered. He may raise *demons*, indeed, in the shape of corpses; but will they eat food that has been blessed by the prophets? With much ceremony Elijah consecrates the elements; and we are evidently required to believe that they were transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ.

"*Helyas.*

"129. Have here bread bouth two,
But I must blesse yt or I goe,
That the feynde, mankyndes foe,
One yt have no power.

"130. This bread I blesse with my hande,
In Jesus name, I understande
The wh^{ch} is lorde of sea and lande,
And kinge in heaven soe hye.

"131. *In nomine Patris*, that all hath wrought —
Et Filii Virginis, that deare us bought, —
Et Spiritus Sancti, is all my thought, —
One God and persons three."

The demon-corpses cannot look on the bread thus blessed, or rather on their great "foe" thus manifest under the species of the bread; they turn away from it with horror and with dread; the prophets triumph; the seduced kings confess their error, and acknowledge the true Christ.

"*Primus Mortuus.*

"132. Alas! put that bread out of my sighte,
To loke one yt I am not lighte;
That printe that is upon it pighte,
That putts me to greate feare.

"*Secundus Mortuus.*

"133. To loke one it I am not lighte,
That bread to me it is soe brighte,
And is my foe bouth day and nighte,
And puts me to greate dreade.

"*Enocke.*

"134. Now, you men that hath done amysse,
You see well what his power is,
Convertes to hym I red, I wys
That you one rood hath boughte.

"*Tercius Rex.*

"135. And now we know appeartely
We have been broughte in heresye,
Wth you to death we will for thy,
And never more torne our thoughte.

"*Quartus Rex.*

"136. Now Enocke and Hely yt is no ney,
You have taunted the tyrrant this same day,
Blessed be Jesu, borne of a maye,
One hymn I 'leeve upon.

"*Primus Rex.*

"137. Thou feature fere[1] wth fantasye,
Wth sorcerye, wichcrafte and nigremy
Thou hast us led in heresye,
Ffye one thy workes eich one.

[1] Fere — wholly, altogether.

" *Secundus Rex.*

"138. Jesu, for thy mickle grace,
Forgeve us all our trespasse,
And bring us to thy heavenly place,
As thou art God and man.
Now ame I wise made through thy mighte,
Blessed be thou Jesu day and nighte!
This greesly groome greetes[1] hym to feighte,
To slea us here anon.

" *Tercius Rex.*

"139. Of our lyves let us not reach[2],
Though we be slayne of such a wrech,
For Jesu his sake that maye us leech[3],
Our soules to bringe to blisse.

" *Quartus Rex.*

"140. That was well sayde, and soe I assente
To dye, for soth is my intente,
For Christes sake, omnipotente,
In cause that is righte wise."

But *Antichrist*, instead of being humbled and driven away, bursts into ungovernable rage: he persists in claiming divinity; and to prove his power, he destroys both the kings and the prophets.

" *Antichristus.*

"141. A false features torne you now!
You shall be slaine, I make a vowe;
And those traytors that soe turned you
I shall make them unfeayne.

"142. That all other by very sighte
Shall knowe that I am most of mighte;
For w^th this sworde now will I feight,
For all you shalbe slayne."

[*Heare Antichristus kylles them.*]

It is now time for a higher personage to interfere; and the archangel *Michael* descends to confound and destroy the impostor. His exhortation is designed to

[1] Greetes, *v.* graiths, harnesses, prepares.
[2] To reach, to reck, to care.
[3] To leech, to heal, preserve, cure.

edify those whom the boasting of *Antichrist* might have staggered.

" *Michaell.*

" 143. Antichristus nowe is comen this day,
Reigne no longer thou ney maye,
He that hath led thee allwaye,
Now hym thou must goe too.
No more men shall be slaine by thee,
My Lorde will dead that thou be,
He that hath gyven thee this postee
Thy soule shall under soe.

" 144. In synne ingendered fyrst thou was;
In synne leade thy life thou hast;
In synne now an ende thou made,
That marred hath many one.

" 145. Three yeares and halfe one, witterly,
Thou hast had leave to destroye
Godes people wickedly,
Through thy fowle read.

" 146. Now thou shalt knowe and witt, in hye,
That more is Godes majesty,
Then eke the devills and thyne thereby [1],
For now thou shalt be dead.

" 147. Thou hast ever served Sathanas,
And had his power in every place;
Therefore thou getts no other grace,
With hym thou must gone."

[*Here Michaell shall kill Antichristus, and Antichristus shall call aloud, Help! help! help!*]

Poor *Antichrist*, as he falls by the hand of his resistless foe, calls for help on the infernal dignitaries, but both his calls and his lamentations are vain: he dies.

" *Antichristus.*

" 148. Helpe, Sathanas and Luciffier!
Belzabubb, bolde Balacheire!
Ragnell, Ragnell, thou art my deare!
Now face I wounder evill.

[1] Thereby, besides.

"149. Alas! alas! where is my power?
Alas! my wittes is in a were;
Nowe bodye and soule bouth in feare,
And all goeth to the devill."
[*Here Antichristus shall die, and two devils shall come.*]

There is something graphic in the appearance of two devils to convey the soul of *Antichrist* to its proper home. They lament his death, because he had deceived many, and, had he been spared, would have deceived more. One of the demons informs us that he was the father of the deceased, who was begotten in "clean whoredom."

"*Primus Demon.*
"150. Anon, master, anon, anon!
From hell grounde I harde thee grone.
I thought not to come my selfe alone,
For worshippe of thyne estate.

"151. With us to hell thou shalbe gone,
For thy death we make great mone,
To wyne more soules into our pond,
But now y^t is too late.

"*Secundus Demon.*
"152. With me thou shalbe, from me thou come,
Of me shall come thy last dome,
For thou hast well deserved;
And, through my mighte and my postee,
Thou hast lived in dignitye,
And many a soule deceived.

"*Primus Demon.*
"153. This bodye was gotten by myne assente
In cleane hordome, veramen̄t,
Of mother wombe or that he wente,
I was hym w^th in.

"154. And taughte hym aye, with myne intente,
Synne by w^ch he shalbe shente[1];
For he did my comandemente,
His soule shall never blyne

[1] Shent; destroyed, ruined.

"*Secundus Demon.*

"155. Now fellow, in faith, greate mone we may make,
For this lorde of estate that standeth us in stead,
Many a fatt morsell we had for his sake
Of soules that have been saved in hell by the head."

[*Here the devils carry Antichristus away.*]

By the power of God, Enoch and Elijah are raised from the dead: they are now to enter the real heaven; for hitherto they have only been in an "earthly paradise."

"*Enocke.*

"156. A Lorde that all shall leade,
And bouth deeme[1] the quicke and dead;
That reverence thee thou on them read,
And them through righte releeved.

"157. I was dead and righte here slaine,
But through thy mighte, Lord, and thy mayne,
Thou hast me raised up againe,
Thee will I love and 'leeve.

"*Helyas.*

"158. Yea, Lorde, blessed must thou be;
My flesh gloryffyed now I see;
Witt ney sleight against thee
Conspired may be by no way.

"159. All that 'leeve in thee stedfastly
Thou helpes, Lorde, from all anoye;
For dead I was and now lyve I;
Honoured be thou aye!

"*Michaell.*

"160. Enocke and Hely come you anon;
My Lorde will that you with me gone
To heaven blisse, bouth bloude and bone,
Ever more there to be.

"161. You have bene lange, for you bene wise,
Dwellinge in earthly parradize,
But to heaven where hym selfe is,
Now shall you goe with me."

[*Here the Archangel shall lead them to heaven, and shall sing "Gaudete."*]

[1] Deem; judge.

"*Finis — Deo Gracias!*" is the appropriate conclusion of the piece.

Assuredly we need make no further comments on this most singular of all performances, which for the first time is thus given to the public. We proceed to the second branch of our subject.

2. *Moral Plays.*

A Moral, or moral play, has been very properly defined to be a drama of which the characters are chiefly allegorical, or abstract, and of which the tendency is to instruct us in the conduct of life. It differed from the mystery or miracle-play, inasmuch as the latter was generally confined to scriptural or hagiologic personages, and to the great events communicated to us by the inspired or earlier writers. Yet, as the reader must already have seen, the character of the two, in the later times of the mysteries, was often combined in the same piece. There are allegorical characters in many of the mysteries, and scriptural or historical personages in many of the morals. But we shall have little difficulty in determining to which of the two classes any particular piece may belong: if the abstract and moral characters preponderate, we may unhesitatingly call it a moral; if scriptural personages, or the mysteries of our faith, we may as confidently class it under the other denomination. Thus, in the eleventh drama of the Coventry series, though Veritas, Justitia, Pax, and Misericordia are introduced, it does not for that reason cease to be a miracle-play, or mystery, since the real personages of scripture history predominate over the abstract. Nor, on the other hand, did the piece which was exhibited to Henry VII. on his entrance into Coventry, and in which Hector, Alexander, Arthur, Charlemagne, St. Edward, Cæsar, &c., were joined with Temperance, Justice, Fortitude, Prudence, Righteousness, &c. cease to be a moral, since the

chief characters were abstract, and the tendency of the whole was such as we have defined to be inherent in one. The reason why historical or scriptural personages were thus associated with such as were purely abstract, must be obvious: no human patience could have been equal to the task of witnessing mere abstract personifications, however excellent the didactic lesson it inculcated, if there was no illusion, no humour, no experience of human life, no touches of pathos. Hence, if interest were to be felt in any exhibition, human characters were to be introduced, and events similar to those in every-day life were to be associated with its moral action.[1]

It is impossible to ascertain the precise period when moral plays were introduced among the dramatic amusements of our ancestors.[*] One thing only is certain, — that they are of greater antiquity than the historians of our stage have ever conjectured. Malone, who is unwilling to go further back than the reign of Edward IV., might have learned that early in the reign of Henry VI. they were exhibited with considerable success; and that even then they were scarcely in their infancy. We know that in the fourteenth century they were popular in France; that some now exist which may be incontestably referred to the beginning of the fifteenth; and from the similarity, often the identity, of subject, we might be justified in concluding that, if the English compositions of this nature were not *translated* from the French, they were immediately *derived* from that language. But such an inquiry as is here suggested could be prosecuted only in France; and if it could be instituted here, it would be inadmissible for two reasons: — first, because this is an English, not a general history of the stage; and next, because our limits are too circumscribed for so wide a range. Without attempting to lift the dark veil which covers their origin, we may observe,

[1] Sharpe, Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries. Collier, History of Dramatic Poetry, ii. 529. Warton, History of English Poetry, iii. 190. Percy, Reliques, 1—134.

that in the reign of the latter sovereign they were frequent; that in the time of the seventh Henry they flourished in all their glory; and that though in the following reigns they were gradually superseded by pieces of what we now term the legitimate drama, they continued in force down to the latter half of the sixteenth century.[1]

Of these performances many were remarkable for two characters, — the Devil and the Vice. 1. "The Devil," says Mr. Collier, "was imported into moral plays from the old miracle-plays, where he figured so amusingly that when a new species of theatrical diversions had been introduced, he could not be dispensed with: accordingly we find him the leader of the seven deadly sins, in one of the most ancient moral plays that have been preserved. He was rendered as hideous as possible by the mask and dress he wore; and from Ulpian Fulwell's *Like will to Like*, 1586 (and from other sources of the same kind which need not be particularised), we learn that his exterior was shaggy and hairy, one of the characters there mistaking him for a dancing bear. His "bottle-nose" and "evil face" are mentioned both in that piece and in T. Lupton's *All for Money*, 1578; and that he had a tail, if it required proof, is evident from the circumstance that the Vice asks him for a piece of it to make a fly-flap. His ordinary exclamation on entering was "Ho, ho, ho!" and on all occasions he was prone to roaring and crying out, especially when, for the amusement of the spectators, he was provoked to it by castigation at the hands of the Vice. It was indeed to be expected that a personage who formed the chief attraction of the play, should be preserved in the new species of entertainment.[2]

[1] Warton, Percy, and Collier, ubi suprà. La Valliere, Bibliotheque du Théâtre Français, tom. i.

"[2] The following extract will illustrate the subject.

"*Of John Adroyns in the dyvyls apparell.*

"It fortunyd that in a market town in the counte of Suffolke there was a stage-play, in the which play one callyd John Adroyns, which dwellyd

2. The other character is not so easily explained. The very word has been matter of much ingenious disputation. Of the laboured etymologies, however, given by various commentators on Shakspeare, who uses the word[1], some are ridiculous, some puerile; and

in a nother vyllage ii myle from thens, playde the dyvyll. And when the play was done thys John Adroyns in the evynyng departed fro the sayd market towne to go home to hys owne house, because he had there no change of clothying, he went forth in hys dyvyll's apparell, whych in the way comying homeward cam thorow a waren of conys belongyng to a gentylman of the vyllage wher he him self dwelt. At whych tyme it fortunyd a prieste, a vycar of a church therby, with ij or iij other unthryfty felows, had brought with them a hors, a hay, and a feret, to thentent there to get conys, and when the feret was in the yerth, and the hay set over the path way where this John Adroyns should come, thys prest, and hys felows saw hym come in the devyll's raiment, consideryng that they were in the dyvyll's service and steyling of conys, and supposing it had ben the dyvyl in dede, for fere ran away. Thys John Adroyns in the devyll's rayment, and because it was somewhat dark, saw not the hay, but went forth in hast and stumbled therat, and fell downe, that with the fal he had almost broken hys neck. But when he was a lytyll revyvyd he lokyd up and spyed it was a hay to catch conys, and lokyd furthur and saw that they ran away for fere of hym, and saw a horse tyed to a bush laden with conys whych they had taken, and he toke the horse and the haye, and lept upon the horse and rode to the gentylmannys place that was lorde of the waren, to the entente to have thanks for takynge suche a pray. And when he came knokyd at the gatys. To whome anone one of the gentylmannys servaunts askyd who was there, and sodeinly openyd the gate, and as sone as he perceyvyd hym in the devyl's rayment was sodenly abashyd, and sparryd the dore agayn, and went in to hys mayster, and sayd and swore to hys mayster that the dyvell was at the gate and wolde come in. The gentylman heryng hym say so callyd another of hys servauntys and bad hym go to the gate to knowe who was there. Thys seconde servaunt came to the gate, durst not open it, but askyd wyth loude voyce who was there? This John Adroyns in the dyvyl's aparell answeryd wyth a hye voyce and sayd, Tell thy mayster I must nedys speke wyth him or I go. Thys seconde servaunt heryng * * * * * *

[eight lines of the original are here wanting]

the devyll in dede that is at the gate syttyng upon an horse laden with soules, and be lykelyhode he is come for your soule, purpos ye to let him have your soule, and if he had your soule I wene he shulde be gone: the gentylman than mervaylously abasshed called his chaplaine, and said, Let a candell be light and gette holy water, and wente to the gate with as many servaunts as durste go with hym, where the chaplayne with much conjuration sayd, In the name of the Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghost I commande, and charge the in the holy name of God to tell me wherefore thou comeste hyther? This John Adroynes in the devyl's apparell seeing them begynne to conjure after such maner sayd: Nay feare not me for I am a good devyl, I am John Adroynes your neighboure in this towne, and he that playde the devyl to-day in the playe. I bryng my mayster a dozen or two of his owne conyes that were stolen in dede, and theyr horse and theyr haye, and made them for fere to ronne awaye. Whanne they harde hym thus speke, by his voyce knewe hym well, and opened the gate and lette hym come in. And so all the forsayd feare was turned to myrthe and disporte."

[1] "And now is this Vice's dagger become a squire."
Henry IV. Part II., Act 3. sc. 2.

" Sir T. Hanmer was of opinion that the name of the *Vice* (a droll figure

the sober reader will be inclined to agree with a modern antiquary that "when the *vicious* qualities annexed to the names of the above characters in our old dramas, together with the mischievous nature of his general conduct and deportment, be (are) considered, there will scarcely remain a doubt that the word in question must be taken in its *literal and common acceptation*." Wickedness, in reality, is the characteristic of the Vice: why then fly to the antipodes for a meaning which lies within the grasp? Equally erroneous are two assertions made with considerable confidence by two unfortunate critics of Shakspeare:—1. That the devil is always accompanied by the Vice, when no fact is more certain than that there are many pieces in which the former only, and many in which the latter only, is introduced. 2. That the Vice is the leading character of the old *mysteries* and moralities, when no one example of the Vice being exhibited in the former species of drama has yet been adduced. This character in later times appears to have been often called *the fool.* "Being generally dressed in a fool's habit," says a more judicious critic than any of the preceding, "he appears to have been gradually and undistinguishably blended with the dramatic fool; yet he was certainly a buffoon of a different sort." The same excellent critic, however, is not so correct when he adds, that "He (the

heretofore much shown upon the stage, whose dress was always a long jerkin, a fool's-cap with asses' ears, and a *thin* wooden dagger) was derived from the French word *vis*, which signifies the same as *visage* does now. From this in part came *visdase*, a word common among them for a fool, which Menage says is but a corruption from *vis-d'asne*, the face or head of an ass. By vulgar use this was shortened to plain *vis* or *vice*. Mr. Warton thinks that the word is only an abbreviation of *device*, the Vice in our old dramatic shows being nothing more than an *artificial* figure, a puppet moved by machinery."—*Malone's Shakspeare.*

Of the first notable derivation, Mr Douce observes that it was unsupported by any thing like authority. This word occurs in no ancient French writer as a theatrical character, and has only been used by modern ones in the sense of ass or fool; and then probably by corruption. Of Mr. Warton's equally precious hypothesis, the same judicious writer aks, "Where is the proof of these assertions, and why should one *puppet in particular* be termed a *device?*"—*Illustrations of Shakspeare*, ii. 465.

We will not weary the reader with other specimens. Never was *profane* writer so cursed with ignorant commentators as the Bard of Avon.

Vice) was *always* a bitter enemy of the devil;" for though on many occasions, "a part of his employment consisted in teazing and tormenting the poor fiend," there were some in which the two characters were on the most amicable terms of intimacy. That of the Vice was frequently changed in the same play, so as to render him scarcely to be recognised: sometimes he even assumed the disguise of a virtue—doubtless in allusion to the scriptural text, that the devil can change himself into an angel of light. "In *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalen*, he several times changes his apparel for the sake of deception. In *The Trial of Treasure*, 1567, he was not only provided, as was customary, with his wooden dagger, but in order to render him more ridiculous, with a pair of spectacles (no doubt of a preposterous size), which he is desired by one of the characters to put on. The long coat worn by the Vice was doubtless that dress which, as Mr. Douce observes, belonged to the idiot or natural fool, often of a mischievous and malignant disposition; and it affords another link of connection between the Vice and the domestic fool. This is a curious subject. There seems to be little doubt that, as the Vice of the old moralities was transformed into the fool or *clown* of the ancient profane plays, so the latter in its turn has given rise to the *merry-andrew* of our vulgar farces. In regard to *Punch*, he is confessedly an alien, and of Italian extraction.[1]

But the nature of our old moralities can be understood only from an analysis of some one of them as a fair specimen of the whole, and characteristic of them.

The only moral which we shall introduce to the reader's notice has merit: we shall therefore give an elaborate, and we hope satisfactory, analysis of it. It was first printed in 1522; but that it was composed

1 Malone's Shakspeare, notes to the Second Part of Henry IV. Warton, History of Eng. Poetry, vol. iii. Douce, Illustrations of Shakspeare, ii. 468. Collier, Annals of the Stage, ii. 466, 264. See also the useful, though much too brief, dissertation of this writer "On the Clowns and Fools of Shakspeare."

full half a century before that time, is, we think, clear from internal evidence. It contains many passages of alliteration, — an undoubted mark of antiquity; and its allusions are of a character not found in dramas written after the opening of the sixteenth century.[1]

The drama opens with a soliloquy by *Mundus*, who much in the vein of Herod boasts of his great power and substance: he is the "ruler of realmes" and "over all *fodys*" he is king:—

"I have stedes in stable stalworthe and stronge,
Also stretes and strondes full strangely ydyght,
For all the worlde wide I wote well is my name,
All rychesse redely it renneth in me:
All pleasure worldely both myrthe and game,
Myselfe semely in *sole* I sende with you to be.
For I am the Worlde, I name you all,
Prynce of powere, and of plente.
He that cometh not whan I do hym call,
I shall hym smyte with poverte,
For poverte I parte in many a place,
To them that wyll not obedyent be."

There is, it must be admitted, some point in this description: poverty in those days, as well as in these, was regarded as the lot of men who refused to obey the world. Nor is there less in the following:—

"I am a kynge in every case:
Me thynketh I am a God of grace;
Ne floure of *vertu* foloweth me,
So here I sette, semely *in se*
I commaunde you, so obedyent be,
And with fre wyle ye folowe me."

Infans is now introduced to our notice; and he appears as in the mysteries without any preparation, without any stage directions, any distinction of act or scene. He speaks of the perils he has undergone in his mother's womb, and at his entrance into life; and he now pathetically laments, his naked, helpless

[1] Reprinted in 1827, in the last edition of Dodsley's Old Plays, xii. 309. 336. ..

condition. Seeing the World, however, he wishes to approach him: —

"*Infans.*
"All hayle, comely-crowned kynge!
God that all made you se and save!"

Of course the monarch returns a gracious reply to the homage:—

"*Mundus.*
"Welcome, fayre chylde, what is thy name?

"*Infans.*
"I wote not, syr, withouten blame,
But ofte tyme my moder in her game
Called me Dallyaunce.

"*Mundus.*
"But my fayre chylde what wouldest thou have?

"*Infans.*
"Syr, of some comforte I you crave;
Mete and clothe my life to save,
And I your true servaunt shall be."

The World grants the request, supplies him with food and raiment, gives him another name, *Wanton*, and bids him return to his new master in fourteen years.[1]

Wanton luxuriates in his new being. He becomes expert in all kinds of games, and in every species of mischief.

"I can with my scorge stycke
My felow upon the heed hytte,
And lyghtly from hym make a skyppe,
And blere on hym my tonge.
If brother or syster do me chyde,
I wyll scratche and also kyke,
And mocke[2] them all berewe."

Besides all these accomplishments, he knows how to whistle, climb trees, rob orchards, take birds' nests, and play the truant. In short, "in the good old days," as we are too apt to call them, boys were much the same

[1] Dodsley, xii. 310.
[2] This must be a misprint, *mocke* for *mache*: "And make them all to rue."

as they are now; a school-boy of the fourth Henry's reign might well be mated with one of William the fourth's.—*Wanton* now remembers that his fourteen years are past, and he must visit that worthy emperor — the World.

> "Hayle, lande of grete honour!
> This vii yere I have served you in hall and in bowre
> With all my trewe entent."

He is again furnished with a name indicative of the time of life at which he is arrived.

> "*Mundus.*
> "Now welcome *Wanton*, my derlynge dere!
> A newe name I shall gyve the here.
> *Love*, *Lust*, *Lykynge* in fere;
> These thy names they shall be,
> All game, and gle, and gladnes,
> All love longynge in lewdness.
> This seven yere forsake all sadnes,
> And than come agayne to me." [1]

Lust and Liking rejoices in his new name, and above all in his new accomplishments and powers; and he expresses his joy in language which combines moral truth with something approaching to poetry.

Towards the close of the seven years, *Lust and Liking* begins to feel conscious of other powers.

> "I wys I *waxe* wonder bolde;
> Now I wyll go the Worlde,
> A heygher scyence to assaye."

Accordingly he appears before his sovereign:

> "All hayle, mayster full of myght!
> I have you served bothe day and nyghte:
> Now I comen, as I you *behyght*
> One and twenty wynters is comen and gone."

Mundus praises him for his past obedience, and gives him another name, *Manhood.* He is entreated to discharge the higher duties before him with diligence and

[1] Dodsley, xii. 312.

fidelity; and, above all things, to return blow for blow, gibe for gibe, and spare no man,—

"Neyther for lande nor for rente."

He is now informed, that the seven mighty kings daily wait on their great sovereign, *the World*, and these he is to love and serve with all his heart. They are the *King of Pride*, the *King of Envy*, the *King of Wrath*, the *King of Covetousness*, the *King of Sloth*, the *King of Gluttony*, and the *King of Lechery*. He particularly attaches himself to Pride and Lechery, whom he engages to serve "truely in every tyde." *Mundus* is so well pleased with his intent and promises, that he dubs him knight.

Manhood is proud of his knightly character, of the feats which he has performed, or of the service in which he has engaged. He has conquered kingdoms; spread his name far and wide, so that no empire breathing durst offend him; he has made blood to flow quite gloriously; has left fingers, hands, feet, heads, on the ground wherever he has gone; many a knightly crown has he cracked, yea, and many a royal one; in short, he is so strong, valorous, wise, and powerful, that no force or knight can withstand him: how, indeed, dare any, seeing that he has such steadfast friends and staunch allies in the seven kings before enumerated? In the midst of this boasting, a new character is introduced, *Conscience*, who prays all present to be counselled by her, and laments the enmity which the whole earth bears to her. She is coarsely upbraided by our knight, who bestows on her some choice epithets, which, as we are not writing for the amusement of the ladies of Billingsgate, we shall not transcribe. He listens, however, to her voice, and a very droll conversation follows, in which a comparison is drawn between the masters he has hitherto served, and those whom he ought to serve. Through her arguments, the weight of which he reluctantly admits, he is compelled to promise in succession that he will abandon five of his kings; but when

the King of Wrath is also to be abandoned, he (Manhood) bursts into a furious passion: —

> " Fye on the, false flaterynge frere!
> Thou shalte rewe the tyme that thou came here.
> The devyll mote set the on a fyre,
> That ever I with the *mete*,
> For thou counseylest me from all gladnes,
> And wolde me *set* unto all sadnes:
> But *or* thou bryngе me in this madnes
> The devyll brake thy necke!" [1]

In the end, however,—for who can resist so tremendous a power? he promises to leave the service both of Mirth and of Covetousness; listens with very laudable patience to an exposition of the Ten Commandments; and promises that he will in future be the liege-man of *Conscience,* and the foe of her foe, *Folly:* but, alas! for human resolutions when they are against the vices of our nature! In the midst of them he falls in with that very character, who talks quite as rationally as Conscience has ever done, and certainly not so dully. When asked what *Folly* can do, he replies, that he can stop the holes of a sieve, or mend an old pan, and that he is an expert player. When the place of his birth is demanded, he answers with some wit, —

> " By my faythe, Syr, in Englande have I dwelled yore,
> And all my auncesters me before.
> But, Syr, in London is my chefe dwellynge.
>
> " *Manhode.*
>
> " In London! where, if a man the sought?
>
> " *Folye.*
>
> " Syr, in Holborne[2] I was forthe brought,
> And with the courtyers I am betaught,
> To Westmynster I used to wende.
>
> " *Manhode.*
>
> " Harke felowe, why do'st thou to Westmynster drawe?
>
> " *Folye.*
>
> " For I am a servaunt of the lawe.
> Covetouse in myne owne felowe;

1 Dodsley, xii. 323.
2 At that time the abode of the fashionable world

We twayne pleate for the kynge;
And poore men that ronne from uplande
He wyll take theyr matter in hande,
Be it ryght or be it wronge,
Theyr thryfte with us shall wende."[1]

In travelling that dreary road, our ancient moral drama, seldom do we meet with so much point of humour. In general, these pieces, so far as respects animation of dialogue, or interest of scene, are much inferior to our old mysteries, on which they have been called an improvement.

Another blow at the friars and monks, who, during the period before us, were the especial objects of a satire, not wholly undeserved. When *Manhood* inquires what other adventures remain, *Folly* replies :—

" In feythe, even streygth to all the freres,
And with them I dwelled many yeres,
And they crowned Folye a kynge.

" *Manhode.*
" I praye the, felowe, whyder wendest thou?

"*Folye.*
" Syr, all Englande to and fro:
Into abbeys and in to nunneryes also;
And alwaye *Folye* dothe felowes fynde." [2]

Manhood now inquires the name of his companion; and hearing that it is *Folly*, he suddenly remembers that against this personage he was advised by *Conscience* to be on his guard. But *Folly* has little respect for the absent monitor.

" A cuckowe for *Conscyence*; he is but a dawe;
He can not elles but preche."

In the end, *Folly* is more than a match for *Conscience*, and *Manhood* is persuaded to forsake the latter's service for the former's.

" *Manhode.*
" Ye, Folye, wyll thou be my trewe servaunt?

[1] Dodsley, xii. 325.
[2] Idem, 326.

"*Folye.*
"Ye, Syr Manhode, here my hande!

"*Manhode.*
"Now let us drynke at this *covenaunt*
For that is curtesy."

Of course *Folly* is joyful at the prospect of the flagon, and he longs for another and more criminal enjoyment:—

"Have, meyster, and drynke well,
And let us make revell, revell!
For I swere by the chyrche of Saynt Myghell
I wolde we were at stewes."

Both agree to visit, without further loss of time, the haunts of vice for which London was so famous; *Folly* being the guide. Ere they depart, however, *Manhood* is so much afraid of meeting *Conscience*, whom he has experienced to be a troublesome follow, that he is resolved to change his name, in the hope of escaping recognition: by his new companion he is called *Shame*. *Folly* travels first, *Shame* behind; and in this manner they are encountered by *Conscience*, when *Shame* completely rebels. *Conscience* being thus abandoned, moralises on the frailty of mankind, and, at length, resolves to seek *Perseverance*, by whose advice he has profited on former occasions, and who hereafter occupies his place in the drama. *Perseverance* delivers a dull homily on the judgment to come.[1]

At length, *Manhood* is transformed into *Age*, who bewails his misspent life, bitterly regretting that he ever forsook the counsels of *Conscience* for those of *Folly*. He had already received some punishment for his sins: he had been whipped, put in the stocks, and confined in Newgate; and he now laboured under the infirmities of age. With no comfort in this life, with remorse for the past, and dread of the future, *Age* falls a prey to despair. But the church is a compassionate mother, and does not intend her wandering son to be lost. In his journey,—he "cares not whyder nor where,"—he is overtaken by *Perseverance*, who accosts

[1] Dodsley, xii. 329.

him by his old name, that of *Manhood,* but he replies it is *Shame.* And ashamed he is of meeting *Perseverance,* the brother of *Conscience,* whom he had so grievously offended. But his new companion comforts him; advises him to forsake *Folly,* and, seeing his good disposition, gives him the name of *Repentance.* Why should he despair? St. Peter had denied Christ; St. Paul had persecuted the Christians even unto death; St. Thomas had refused to believe in Christ's resurrection; and St. Mary Magdalen had "lyved long in lechery:" —

"And yet these to Chryst are derlynges dere,
And now be sayntes in heaven dere."

How could such examples be alleged in vain? *Age* sincerely repents, and so deserves his name. A tedious homily on the chief articles of Christianity, and on the duties of a sinner, follows; and the play ends with the advice of *Perseverance,* who beseeches Christ,

"which has made us all,
Cover you with his mantell perpetuall."

Here we close our brief account of Moral plays, for which we shall probably receive the reader's thanks. Most of them, indeed, are insufferably dull; and we should gladly have omitted even this slight notice of them, had not they been too closely connected with the early history of the English stage to be thus treated. We proceed to a part of our subject which will, we hope, be found more attractive — the origin and progress of the profane or legitimate drama.

3. *The Legitimate Drama.*

As the Mysteries or Miracle plays, incontestibly the most ancient of our dramatic productions, gave rise to the Moral plays, and by degrees became to a certain extent combined with them; so in their turn the latter are the source of the legitimate drama, — of the comedies, tragedies, interludes, farces, and other pieces

in which individual character — those of history or of ordinary life — took the place of personified virtues and vices. But in both cases the progress was so slow, as to be scarcely perceptible. We have before observed that there are mysteries in which abstract moral qualities are personified: in like manner, there are morals in which historical and real characters are introduced. As in the one case the predominance of sacred or allegoric personages determined whether the composition in which they appeared should be classed under the mysteries or the morals; so in the other the predominance of real over abstract or fictitious characters determines whether it shall belong to the moral or to the legitimate drama. The name, however, of the legitimate drama can scarcely be applied to pieces in which there is any one abstraction; and such mongrel productions can be designated only by a periphrasis — "Moral Plays *resembling* Comedy and Tragedy." Of these we shall give two or three specimens by anonymous writers, that the reader may perceive by what gradations the change was effected.

From the names it might be supposed that *Thersites*, a drama written as early as 1537, had a classic foundation; but this is not the fact. The events have no connection with history; nor from the piece itself could we infer that the auther, whoever he was, had any other knowledge of Grecian poetry than there had been a Trojan war, and that Thersites was one of the actors in it. — To a more recent period, viz. about the middle of the sixteenth century, may be referred the "Tragicall Comedye" (the terms are very loosely applied by our old writers) of "Apius and Virginia," which had certainly a foundation in Roman history. It is remarkable as being the first historical play publicly acted in our language.

Sackville's *Ferrex and Porrex*, as we shall perceive in the biographical sketch of that nobleman, was undoubtedly written before it; and the same may probably be said of Edwards's "*Damon and Pythias*;" but neither was acted in *public*; they were merely exhibited before the court of Queen Elizabeth. Nor is it less curious from

its combining real history with some characteristics of our old morals. In it we have *Conscience, Justice, Remorse, Comfort, Reward, Doctrine,* and *Haphazard the Vice,* in addition to *Apius Virginius* the father, *Virginia* the daughter, the *Mother* of Virginia, and some domestics. The part, however, allotted to the abstract personifications is, with the exception of the *Vice,* who is throughout a most important character, very insignificant; so that this "Tragicale Comedie" makes nearer approaches to the legitimate drama, than any piece yet noticed. [1]

Referring the reader to the Roman history for the real circumstances of the story, we may observe that the design of the tragedy is to recommend that greatest of female virtues, — *chastity.*

After the prologue *Virginius* comes on the stage, and in a soliloquy praises his own lot, so happy is he with his wife and daughter Virginia, whose hearts are his, and for one whom he still feels all the fervour of passion, for the other all the affection of a doting parent. The author was doubtless unconscious of any impropriety when he made the husband speak of his wife as framed

——" *out of his tender side,*
A piece of mud formosité with him for to abide;"

and equally so when, in the midst of his grateful effusion to the gods, seeing both approach, he observes,

——" to *church* I deeme they walke."

Both enter, as Virginius conceals himself to overhear their conversation. The mother expresses unbounded satisfaction with her daughter, and hopes that when her bones are laid in the grave, she will prove a good nurse to her father. Nothing can exceed the affection with which both speak of him; until, in an ecstasy of joy, he appears among them, and blesses them. They respond to his transport, and sing and dance with a glee

[1] "The tragicale comedie of Apius and Virginia," in Dodsley's Old Plays, vol. xii. last edit. This edition, we are sorry to perceive, must have taken some liberties in occasionally modernising the orthography.

that must appear somewhat surprising in an old man like Virginius, and in a mother who through years was fast descending into the tomb. — On their exit *Haphazard* the *Vice* appears, destined ere long to spoil their happiness. While doubting what disguise he shall assume, the best to supply his own wants and to impose on mankind, two domestics (whose we are not informed), Mansipulus and Mansipula, are introduced merely to show what influence the *Vice* can exercise over poor human nature. Both, characteristically enough, quarrel with each other for their common laziness in neglecting the duty with which they had just been charged by "their lord and lady." That duty was no other than to strew my lord and lady's seat *at church,* to which both were then hastening,

"With primroses, cowslips and violets sweete,
With mints and with marigolds and margerum meete."

The terms in which they scold each other could not surely be surpassed by the most eloquent fishwoman of the present day.

Here *Haphazard* somewhat unaccountably interferes, and requests them to be at peace. At length he succeeds; but it is only that he may persuade them to join him in his wanton recreations. Such is the bewitching influence of his incentive,—

"It is but in hazard, and yf you be mist,
And so it may happen you feel not his fist," —

that they are easily persuaded to remain "and sing." A third servant appears to reproach them for their sluggishness; but he too is infected by the mania of pleasure, and all three join Haphazard in the dance, singing, merrily, in a sort of chorus, that let the worst happen, they can but be beaten. Each then sings alone:—

"What if my lordinge doo chaunce for to miss me,
The worst that can happen is cudgell will kiss me."

The serious business of the drama now commences.

Judge Appius enters, and relates his unconquerable love to Virginia. After a wanton description of his passion, which, for two reasons, is without hope, since he exclaims,

"Oh! that my yeares were youthfull yet, or that I were unwedded!"

he is consoled by Haphazard, who promises him the fruition of his wishes, provided he will follow the directions of the Vice. The plot is, that some one shall depose before the Judge, that Virginia was stolen away by Virginius, and that she is not his daughter. The truth, indeed, is almost sure to be discovered; but then as both parties will be summoned to appear, the young lady will be in the power of Appius. In vain do *Conscience* and *Justice* attempt to dissuade Appius from this fatal design; the Vice prevails. No sooner, however, has he taken this resolution, than adieu to the inward happiness which he before possessed. The struggles of remorse, and the yearnings of a guilty passion, are well described in the following verses:—

"*Appius.*

"The furies fell of Lymbo lake
My princely daies doo shorte:
All drownde in deadly woes I live
That once did joy in sport.
I live and languish in my lyfe
As doth the wounded deare;
I thirst, I crave, I call and crie,
And yet am naught the neare.
And yet I have that me so much
Within the realme of mine;
But Tantalus amids my care
I hunger, starve, and pine.
As Sissifus, I roule the stone
In vain to top of hill,
That ever more uncertainly
Revolving slideth still.
Oh! as if to her it were to me,
What labours would I flie,
What raging seas would I not plow
To her commoditie!

But out, alas! I doubt it sore,
Lest drousy Morpheus
His slumbry kingdomes graunted hath,
With dewes and bewteous.
Oh! Gods above, that rule the skies,
Ye babes that bragge in blisse;
Ye Goddesses, ye Graces yon,
What burning brunt is this?
Bend downe your ire, destroy me quicke,
Or els to graunt me grace;
No more, but that my burning brest
Virginia may imbrace.
If case your eares be dead and deafe,
The fiende and sprites beloe,
Ye careless carles of Limbo lake
Your forced mightes doo shoe.
Thou caitiffe kinge of darksome dens,
Thou Pluto, plagued knave,
Sende forth thy sacred vengeaunce straight,
Consume them to the grauve,
That will not aide my cause." [1]

Claudius, one of his officers, consents to aid the designs of the prince, summoning Virginius to answer for the theft of Virginia during infancy from the roof of Claudius, her real father. While the summons is executing, the Vice again appears, congratulating himself on the success of his design. To illustrate his mischievous influence, and at the same time to exhibit the character of servants in those days, the three whom he had seduced by his insinuations again appear, each boasting of the success with which they had deceived by lies and excuses the lord and lady, and thus escaped punishment. All join in a song, and agree that in future no danger, however pressing, shall induce them to forsake good company. In this as in some other scenes, we have a plentiful store of anachronisms, of improprieties, and of absurdities.

In the next scene Virginius, in a soliloquy, expresses his surprise that he who has done such service for the prince and state should be cited to appear before the

[1] Dodsley's Old Plays, xii. 358.

tribunal of the judge. He is yet unacquainted with the crime laid to his charge; but he is soon in the presence of Appius and Claudius, where the latter deposes to the fiction suggested by Haphazard. Virginius is commanded to bring the maiden before them, to be confined in close custody until it be ascertained whose daughter she actually is. Why she should be thus confined, as if guilty of some heinous offence, we are not informed; but the whole piece is so inartificial in its design, and so rude in its execution, that we wonder how its representation could ever have been tolerated. Virginius is soon acquainted with the lustful views of Appius — how? by the disclosure of some one participating in the plot? no! but by no less veracious a personage than *Rumour*. In the midst of the despair occasioned by the fatal intelligence he is joined by his daughter, to whom he discloses the perfidious plot, and who, to insure her honour, earnestly begs to die by his hand. At length he reluctantly consents, separates her head from the body, and bears the bloody token to Appius. When the latter gazes on the pale countenance, and learns by whom the deed has been perpetrated, in a transport of fury he summons *Justice* and *Reward* to execute the unnatural murderer. But they are no longer obedient to his will; from his ministers they are become his masters: the one upbraids him for his perversion of right; the other decrees him to death by the hand of the man he had injured. He is accordingly immured in prison while preparations are making for his punishment; but to escape the shame of the exhibition, he kills himself. Claudius, whose death *Justice* had also decreed, is, at the entreaty of Virginius, only banished; and Haphazard, who vainly endeavours to avert his fate, is led to the gallows. To the last, however, the Vice indulges in his characteristic love of wit. Virginius is not punished for his deed; which *Doctrine*, *Fame*, *Memory*, and *Reward*, promise to transmit with glory to the most distant posterity.

From the preceding analysis, it is evident that this

piece exhibits more power of imagination: it has often too considerable vigour of expression; but the characters are not true to life; and there is no individuality in any of them. There, however, are qualities not to be found in any dramatic writers prior to the latter half of Elizabeth's reign. In estimating the merit of a piece, we must compare it with its immediate predecessors or its contemporaries; assuredly not with its successors, however immediate. The same reason will hold good in literature as in science: we have no more right to compare these anonymous dramatists with Greene or Marlowe — omitting all mention of Shakspeare, with whom few Englishmen will allow anything to be compared [1] — than we have to place a Boerhaave and a Davy on the same level.

The preceding play affords proof that, before the middle of the sixteenth century, the Roman history was ransacked for subjects of the drama. The next step was directly calculated to imitate the classic dramatic writers. The *Andria* of Terence was certainly not only translated, but acted, in the former half of that century; and probably this was the first attempt of the kind in our language. It is equally probable that *Jacke Jugeler*, which is founded, according to the author's confession in the prologue, or "Plautus's first comedy," was the earliest direct imitation of a classic original. It approximates more closely to the regular drama than any of the preceding: in fact, it could scarcely be recognised as a moral play, but for the introduction of that everlasting mixture of buffoonery and mischief, the *Vice*. A footman named *Jenkin Careaway* is despatched on a message by his master. On the way, he does so far throw care away as to loiter to play at dice, and steal apples. The *Vice*, who is as ready to perceive as he is to encourage misconduct, and, from pure love of mischief, no less eager to witness its punishment, resolves to bring the rogue into a scrape. He

[1] "And rival all but Shakspeare's name below."

assumes not merely the habit, but the air, mien, complexion, and voice of Jenkins, and in the personation succeeds so marvellously, that the latter is utterly confounded at the appearance. The poor footman is at first unable to believe that he is not himself; nor can all the eloquence of the vice fully reason him out of his identity, until he is soundly cudgelled, and forced to confess that he is not Jenkins, but some other person. There is some humour in the confusion; but the manner of Plautus has not, as we may readily suppose, been completely imitated. Like all other pieces too of the age in which it appeared, it is sufficiently ludicrous from its intermixture of modern names, places, and manners with the ancient. Even where the piece was a professed translation, as in the case of *Jocasta*[1] (the Phœnissæ of Euripides), the same licences were taken. Jocasta is partly a paraphrase, and partly an abridgment, of the great tragedy. There are many omissions, retrenchments, and transpositions." "Some of the beautiful odes of the Greek chorus are neglected, and others substituted in their places, newly written by the translators." The same liberties were taken with most of the ten tragedies of Seneca, which were translated at different times, from 1560 to 1581, and which were all thrown together in the latter year. Most of them had been published separately.[2] If we add that most of the classic poets were translated and published in Elizabeth's reign, we may form some idea of the avidity with which ancient learning was pursued; and we may be expected to find many traces of the prevailing taste in our national drama. But they are generally insipid; nor would any patience be sufficient to run through them, were it not for the burlesque mixture of the modern and the ancient, so characteristic of the majority.[3]

[1] "Jocasta, a Tragedie written in Greeke by Euripides: translated and digested into Acte by George Gascoigne and Francis Linewelmerse of Grayes-Inn, and there by them presented, An. 1566."
[2] For an account of these translations, see Warton's History of English Poetry, III. 205, &c.
[3] Warton, ubi suprà.

The rage for classical allusions was so general, that, even in the comedies and farces, they were frequent. Thus in that singular drama, *Common Conditions*, in the dialogue between Nomides and Sabia, — the former accuses the female, the latter the male, sex of inconstancy; we have a display of reading: —

"*Nomides.*

" First, what love, I praie you, bare *Helena* unto her lorde and kyng?
What constancie in *Creseda* did rest in every thyng?
What love, I praie you, bare *Phedria* unto her Theseus,
When in his absence she desired his sonne *Hippolitus*?
What true love eke bare *Medea* unto duke Jason he?
Tushe, ladie! in vain it is to talke, they all deceitfull be;
And therefore, ladie, you must yeeld to me in that respect!
Men still are just, though women must their plighted vowes neglect."

Sabia, not in the least daunted by this array of examples, soon exhibits us many of a contrary nature, and no less notorious.

" Then, Sir Knyght, how faithfull was *Eneas* to *Didon's* grace?
How faithful was duke *Jason* — he whom *Medea* did aide,
To whom he plighted faithe by vowe none other to embrace,
When he to winne the golden fleece by *Otes* was dismaide?
How faithfull was *Diomedes*, one of the Greekish crue?
Though *Troilus* therein was juste, yet was he founde untrue."

But this comedy has entitled him to our attention, inasmuch as, though partaking largely of the moral, it yet contains many features of the romantic drama. "Common Conditions" is the *Vice* of the "comedy;" and his object is, of course, to be mischievous when he can. Now, if this piece were complete, and were easy accessible, we should not be much disposed to analyse it. To one scene only can we advert, which will show that *farce* was not unknown to our stage in the middle of the sixteenth century. *Common Conditions* is captured by three Arabian tinkers, *Thrif*, *Drift*, and *Unthrift*, who are thieves as well as tinkers, and who resolve to hang him. A rope is brought, and the poor

[1] Payne Collier, ii. 379.

Vice is about to be hung from the branch of a tree, when he offers himself to ascend the tree with the rope round his neck, and take the fatal leap :—

" *Conditions.*

" Ha ! and there be no remedie, but that needs hang I must,
Give me the halter : I 'le to it myself, and laie all care in the dust.

" *Unthrifte.*

" I am sure thou meanest not to hang without helpe of a friend !

" *Conditions.*

"I'st not as goode to hang myself, as another hale the ende?

" *Unthrifte.*

" By gogs blood, my maisters, and he will we are all content,
For then in tyme for hanging hym we neede not repent,
Well, Drift, give the halter unto the elf !

" *Conditions.*

" Ha ! was there ever little knave driven to hang hymself?
Nay ! I must also request your aide to helpe me into the tree !

" *Shifte.*

" Naie, if you lacke any helpe, then hang us all three,
So lowe—now dispatche, and with spede make an ende !"

The Vice being now safely hoisted into the tree, is in no hurry to fulfil their benevolent intention, and in return to the command that he should "make an ende," he inquires,—

" What to doe?

" *Drifte.*

" Marie, hang thyself !

" *Conditions.*

" Naie, by your leave, that is more than I doe intende.

" *Unthrifte.*

" Why, I am sure thou intendest not to serve us in such sort?

" *Conditions.*

" Were not he mad would hang himself to shewe three tinkers sport ?

" *Shifte.*

" Why, I am sure to serve us so thou doest not intende !

" *Conditions.*

" A mad foole he were would desperately die, and never did offende.

"*Shifte.*

"By gog's bloud, Ile teare him doune, or else Ile lose my life!

"*Conditions.*

'Backe againe! or Ile be so bolde as pare your nailes with my knife!"

Common Conditions now keeps them manfully at bay with his dagger, loudly calling for help, until they precipitately retreat.

We cannot dismiss this "comedy" without transcribing the pirates' song, which besides its merit, is probably the oldest specimen of the kind in our language, and the burden is,—

"*Lustely, lustely, lustely let us saile forthe!*
The wind trim doth serve us, it blowes from the North.

"All thinges we have ready, and nothing we want,
To furnish our ship that rideth hereby;
Victals and weapons, thar be nothing skant,
Like worthie mariners ourselves we will trie.
"*Lusteley, lusteley, &c.*

"Her flagges be new trimmed, set floating alofte,
Our ship for swift swimming, oh she doeth excell!
We fear no enemies, we have escaped them ofte,
Of all ships that swimmeth, she beareth the bell.
"*Lustely, lustely, &c.*

"And here is a maister excelleth in skill,
And our maister's mate, he is not to seeke;
And here is a boteswain will do his good will,
And here is a ship boye, we never had leeke.
"*Lustely, lustely, &c.*

"If fortune then faile not, and our next voiage prove,
Wee will return merely, and make good cheare;
And holde all together as friends linkt in love,
The cannes shal be filled with wine, ale and beare.
"*Lustely, lustely, &c.*"

We need not multiply examples, of which the curious may find enough in the productions of our early printers. These which we have already given will amply suffice to instruct the reader in the origin of our stage.

From the preceding section, the following inferences may, we think, be legitimately drawn:—

I. That though miracle plays or mysteries are undeniably the most ancient specimens of the drama existing in our language, they were probably preceded by such as were of a character purely profane.

2. That the *religious* dramas have a depth of antiquity which we should vainly attempt to fathom; that they existed prior to St. Gregory Nazianzen.

3. That moral plays, or, as they are often termed, moralities, were the natural offspring of the mysteries.

4. That both were derived from some French original, though unquestionably so much changed for adaptation to the minds of our ancestors, as in many cases to claim the merit of new pieces.

5. That though the legitimate or regular drama as it now exists was doubtless derived from the morals, a powerful concurrent cause was the new impulse given to the human mind by the study of classical literature.

II. *Biographical Sketches of Dramatists prior to John Heywood.*

John Skelton.—Of our early dramatic writers, from Skelton to Ben Jonson, so little relating to their actions is known, that, were it not for their works, which afford sufficient materials for criticism, the biographical sketches of all might be comprised in a few pages. As, therefore, we can derive little interest from the scanty records of their lives, we must dwell on such circumstances as characterise the poet and the age, rather than the man. For this reason much of the present section may be less amusing, but probably it may be found the more instructive.

John Skelton was descended from a Cumberland family of that name; but the place and time of his birth are equally unknown. We are no less ignorant where he passed the greater part of his life. It has been said that he studied at both universities. That he belonged to Oxford is indubitable from the testimony of Caxton, Bale, and Pitts: hence he has been properly inserted by Wood in the Athenæ Oxonienses. Whether, with equal justice, he may be claimed by Cambridge, is not, perhaps, easy to be determined. There certainly occurs in the archives of the latter university the name of John Skelton M.A., in 1484; and we know that the poet served in 1507 the cure of Trempington, in that county. But these circumstances alone cannot identify the two, though they were probably one and the same. Little is to be assumed from a kindred name. In 1512 we meet with a John Skelton, as vicar of Dultyng, in the diocese of Bath and Wells; and who in the subsequent year was provided with other preferment in the same district; but that this was the poet is reasonably doubted by Wood. All that we know with certainty is, that the John Skelton before us held the rectory of Diss, in Norfolk, in conjunction with the cure of Trempington; that he was early celebrated as a poet; that he was crowned with the laurel wreath at Oxford; that he was poet-laureat to Henry VIII., if not to the father of that sovereign. Judging from the character of his writings, we should infer that he was much fitter for the service of Apollo than for that of the altar; and tradition confirms the inference. He is said to have converted the pulpit to a vehicle of buffoonery and satire, and to have scandalised his flock by the irregularity of his conduct. Whether this be true or not, one thing is certain, — that he fell under the heavy censure of his diocesan, the bishop of Norwich, by whom he appears to have been suspended. The cause, however, was not so much his jovial or his satirical

spirit as his keeping a concubine.[1] But this term is so loosely applied by our old writers, that the reader must be cautioned against inferring that she was in the relation usually understood by it. From the surviving monuments of the middle ages we have evidence enough that the clergy frequently married; but as the canons refused to sanction the connection, the woman was always called a concubine. We are, indeed, informed (though on authority somewhat doubtful), that even on his death-bed Skelton conscientiously regarded *his* woman as his wife; but by what casuistry he persuaded himself of this would be difficult to be conceived. Like all the ecclesiastics of the period, he had vowed chastity: he knew that neither by the canon nor by the civil law could he raise a paramour to the dignity of a wife; and he must have been a bold thinker if in this respect he placed his own conviction above the authority of the church universal, and of the written law of every European country. At this period the opinions of Luther on the subject were not much diffused in England; and if this clergyman were really married, we might be surprised at his boldness, when we remember the severity of the eighth Harry towards such offenders. Whether she was his wife or his mistress, she was regarded by his diocesan in the latter light only; and probably after his suspension his time was chiefly passed in London. This event might have exasperated a temper never one of the mildest, and have added pungency to the satire which he unsparingly lavished on all who had the misfortune to displease him. So long as he confined his attacks to the begging friars, or even to the bishops in general, he was safe enough; but when he had the imprudence to raise his shafts to no less elevated a head than that of cardinal Wolsey, he was made to repent his temerity.

1 "Qui (episcopus) habito de vitæ et moribus ejus examine, deprehendit hominem votam Deo castitatem violasse, imo concubinam domi suæ diu tenuisse." — *Pitts.*

To escape the vengeance of that prelate, he fled to the sanctuary of Westminster; and by the abbot was kindly entertained to the period of his death, in June 1529. Had his life been protracted to the following year, he might have exulted over the fall of his illustrious persecutor.[1]

The verses which called down the cardinal's wrath are remarkable for their boldness and even for their scurrility.

The piece, "Why come ye not to Court?" is entirely aimed at the lord cardinal:[2]

"He is set so high
In his hierarchy
Of frantic frensy,
And folish fantasy,
That in the chamber of stars
All matters there he mars.
Clapping his rod on the board,
No man dare speak a word;
For he hath all the saying,
Without any renaying.[3]
He rolleth in his records,
He saith, "How say ye, my lords?
Is not my reason good?"
(Good even, quod Robin Hood!)
Some say, "yes!" And some
Sit still as they were dumb.
Thus thwarting ever them,
He ruleth all the roast
With bragging and with boast.
Borne up on every side
With pomp and with pride,
With trump up, alleluya!
For dame Philargerya

[1] From the above connection, and from the satire levelled at the mendicant friars, Mr. Chalmers seems to infer that Skelton had "imbibed some of the principles of the reformation" The inference is not very logical, nor is it confirmed by the poet's writings. On the contrary, in "Colin Clout," he strongly reprobates the opinions of Wycliffe, Huss, and Luther

[2] Pitsæus, De Illustribus Angliæ Scriptoribus, p. 701. Caxton, Preface to the Eneid (cited by Chalmers, English Poets, vol. ii. p. 227.). Wood, Athenæ Oxonienses, by Bliss, vol. i. col. 49. Chalmers, Life of Skelton, as above. Ritson, Bibliographia Poetica, p. 102.

[3] *Renaying*, speaking against.

Hath so his heart in hold,
He loveth nothing but gold.
And Asmodeus of hell.
Maketh his members swell
With Dalila to Mell,
That wanton damsoel.

"Adieu, Philosophia!
Adieu, Theologia!
Welcome, dame Simonia!
With dame Castrimergia![1]
To drink and for to eat
Sweet ipocras and sweet meat!
To keep his flesh chaste,
In Lent for a repast,
He eateth capons stewed,
Pheasant and partridge mewed,
Hens, chickens, and piggs.

"Spareth neither maid nor wife;
This is apostle's lyfe!"[2]

In the same strain the poet runs through several stanzas, until, waxing hot on the subject, he exposes both the low origin and the ignorance of the cardinal.

But this mad Amalek,
Like to Amamelek,
He regardeth lords
No more than potshords.[3]
He is in such elation
Of his exaltation,
And the supportation
Of our soverein lord,
That, God to record,
He ruleth all at will,
Without reason or skill.
Howbeit they be primordial
Of his wretched original,
And his base progeny,

[1] From γαστρι μαργια, love of the throat, gluttony.
[2] "Why come ye not to Court?" in Skelton's Works, p. 147. We have ventured, in several places, to *modernise* the language.
[3] Potsherds.

And his greasy genealogy,
He came of the sink royal
That was cast out of a butcher's stall [1]
But however he was born,
Men would have the less scorne
If he would consider
His birth and room together,
And call to his minde
How noble and how kinde
To hym he hath found
Our soverayne lord, — chief ground
Of all this prelacy,
And set him nobly
In great authority
Out from a low degree,
Which he cannot see,
For he was — pardy! [2]
No doctor of divinity,
Nor doctor of the law,
Nor of none other saw, [3]
But a poor maister of art:
God wot he had little part
Of the quatrivials,
Nor yet of trivials,
Nor of philosophy,
Nor of good policy,
Nor of astronomy,
Nor acquainted with a fly
With venerable Ali,[4]
Nor with royal Ptolomy,
Nor with Albumasar,
To treat of any star
Fixed or else movable.
His Latin tongue doth hobble;
He doth but clout and cobble
In Tully's faculty,
Called humanitie." [5]

That this proud clergyman would return good for

[1] This is untrue. Wolsey was not the son of a butcher, but of a private gentleman.
[2] Pardy, a French ejaculation.
[3] Saw, faculty.
[4] A celebrated Mahommedan commentator of Aristotle.
[5] All this is sheer malignity. Wolsey had considerable learning, joined to a commanding, however misdirected, genius.

evil, that he would even forgive the slightest insult to his person, circumstances, or character, was not to be expected. He was by nature vindictive; and had not the poet been so fortunate as to obtain the abbot's favour—no slight presumption of the cardinal's unpopularity — he would not have escaped without mutilation, perhaps not with life. So much had he exasperated all men by his scurrility, that no voice was raised to mitigate his lot: both he and his persecutor passed unheeded, unlamented, from the world.[1]

[1] That Skelton was not much sooner silenced by Wolsey, might partly have been owing to his love of jesting, and to the favour with which it caused him to be regarded by king and nobles. For them he composed his "Merie Tales," and we give two as proofs of the reputation of the jovial laureate.

"TALE I.

"*How Skelton came late home to Oxforde from Abington*

"Skelton was a English-man borne, as Skogan was, and he was educated and brought uppe in Oxfoorde, and there was he made a poet laureat. And on a tyme hee had bene at Abbington to make mery, wher that he had eate salte meates, and he dyd come late home to Oxfoorde; and he dyd lye in an ine named the Tabere, whyche is now the Angell, and he dyd drynke and went to bed. Aboute mydnighte he was so thyrstie or drye, that hee was constrayned to call the tapstere for drynke, and the tapstere heard hym not. Then he cryed to hys oste and hys ostess, and to the osteler for drynke, and no man would heare him. 'Alacke,' sayd Skelton, 'I shall peryshe for lacke of drynke: what remedye?' At last he dyd crie out, and sayd 'Fyer, fyer, fyer!'

"When Skelton harde every man bustled himself upward, and some of them were naked, and some were halfe asleepe, and amased, and Skelton dyd crye 'Fyer, fyer!' (styll), that everye man knew not where to resorte, Skelton dyd go to bed; and the oste and the ostess, and the tapstere, with the osteler, dyd runne to Skelton's chambere wythe candles lygthed in theyr handes, saying, 'Where, where, where is the fyer?' 'Here, here,' sayd Skelton; and poynted hys fynger to hys mouth, sayinge, 'fetch me some drynke to quenche the fyer, and the heate, and the drinesse of my mouthe:' and so they dyd. Wherfore, it is goode for every man to helpe hys owne selfe in tyme of nede wyth some policie or crafte, so be yt ther bee no deceit nor falshed used."

"TALE II.

"*How Skelton drest the Kendal-man in the sweat time.*

"On a tyme Skelton rode from Oxfoorde to London wyth a Kendal-man, and at Uxbrydge they bayted. The Kendal-man layde hys cappe upon the borde in the halle, and he went to serue hys horse. Skelton took the Kendal-man's cappe, and dyd putte betwyxt the lyninge and the outer syde a dysh of butter. And when the Kendal-man had dreste hys horse, he dyd come yn to diner, and dyd putte on hys cappe. (That tyme the sweatynge sycknesse was in Englande) At the laste, when the butter had taken heate of the Kendal-man's heade, yt dyd begynne to ron over hys face and aboute hys cheekes. Skelton sayd, 'Syr, you sweate soore; beware

As a dramatist, Skelton is known only from two moral pieces, — the *Nigramansir* and *Magnyfycence*. Of the former there was an edition by Wynken de Worde[1], but not a copy is known to exist, and all that the curious reader can learn of it is from the analysis by Warton. The characters are, a *Necromancer*, the *Devil*, a *Notary Public*, *Simonie*, and *Philargyria*, or Avarice. It is partly a satire on some abuses in the church; yet not without a due regard to decency, and an apparent respect for the dignity of the audience. The story, or plot, is the trial of *Simony* and *Avarice*. The devil is the judge, and the notary public acts as an assessor or scribe. The prisoners, as we may suppose, are found guilty, and ordered into hell immediately. "There is no sort of propriety in calling this play the Necromancer; for the only business and use of this character is to open the subject in a long prologue, to evoke the devil, and summon the court. The devil kicks the necromancer for waking him so soon in the morning: a proof that this drama was performed in the morning, perhaps in the chapel of the palace. A variety of measures, with shreds of Latin and French, is used; but the devil speaks in the octave stanza. One of the stage-directions is, *Enter Belsebub with a Berde*. To make him both frightful and ridiculous, the devil was most commonly introduced on the stage wearing a visor with an immense beard. Philargyria quotes Seneca and Saint Austin: and Simony offers the devil a bribe. The devil rejects her offer with much indignation; and swears by the *foule*

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that you have not the sweatynge syckness.' And the Kendal-man sayd, 'By the masse, I'se wrang; I mus go tyl bed.' Skelton sayd, 'I am skilled in physicke, and 'specially in the sweatynge syckneese, that I wyll warrant anye man.' 'In good fayth," sayd the Kendal-man, 'do see, and I'se pay for your skott to London.' 'Then,' sayd Skelton, 'get you a kerchief, and I will bryng you abed.' The which was done. Skelton caused the cappe to be sod in boat lee, and dryed it. In the morning Skelton and the Kendal-man dyd ryde merily to London."

[1] "The *Nigromansir*, a small Enterlude and a pittnie, written by Maister Skelton, laureate, and plaid before the King and Estatys, at Woodstoke, on Palme Sunday." 4to. 1504. Ritson, in his usual manner, denies this piece ever existed — just as he denied the existence of Dr. Percy's folio.

Eumenidés, and the hoary beard of Charon, that she shall be well fried and roasted in the unfathomable sulphur of Cocytus, together with Mahomet, Pontius Pilate, the traitor Judas, and king Herod. The last scene is closed with a view of hell, and a dance between the devil and the necromancer. The dance ended, the devil trips up the necromancer's heels, and disappears in fire and smoke." Great must have been the edification and entertainment which king Henry VII. and his court derived from the exhibition of so elegant and rational a drama.

Of the second play, — Magnyfycence, — we shall only say that it is one of the dullest in our language. If neither of the above dramas has any merit in itself, the cause must be attributed to the rage for moral plays so general in the age of Skelton.

Into the merits of Skelton as a *poet* we will not enter. The reader may find enough on the subject in Warton.[1]

John Rastall. — Of this writer less is known than of his contemporary Skelton. When we have observed that he was born in London; that he was educated at Oxford; that by profession — then a highly respectable one — he was a printer; that he was a learned man, being well versed in the mathematics and the sciences, especially in philosophy and theology, on which he wrote largely; that he was a versifier; that he was the brother-in-law of sir Thomas More; and that he died in London in 1536, we have said all that can be gathered respecting his life.[2]

To this writer two plays have been attributed by our historians of the stage — an interlude on the *Nature of the Four Elements*, and *Gentleness and Nobility*. Of

[1] Warton's History of English Poetry, by Prior, 4 vols. 8vo. 1827.
[2] Bale, Pitts, and Antony à Wood.

the former we shall only say that its chief object is to render the stage a medium for the dispensation of science; that it is a tedious lecture on cosmogony and physics; and that though, in the view of enlivening it, we have some "mery conseytes," in a dialogue between *Sensual Appetite, Humanity*, and a *Taverner*, in which there is a freedom of language not quite philosophic, still the piece is too heavy to be perused.[1]

The second of these pieces, *Gentylnes and Nobylyte*, can scarcely have been intended for representation. It is merely a dialogue between a *Knight*, a *Merchant*, and a *Ploughman*, on the comparative merit of their respective callings. It does not, however, for this reason cease to be dramatic, according to the idea entertained of the drama by our ancestors previous to the reign of Elizabeth. It opens with a speech by the *Merchant*, who dwells with much pride on the utility of his profession alike to the nation and the individual. Of this truth he himself is an illustration, since he has

"Gotten many a thousand pound,"

and for that reason is every where "magyfyed and gretly regardyd,"

"And a wyse and noble man estemyd."

The *Knight* is indignant at the very mention of the term noble.

"But in presumption methynk ye excell
To call yourself noble in presence here.
I wys men know what your ancestours were,
And of what grete stock descended ye be:
Your fadyr was but a blackesmyth,— perde!"

"What then?" demanded the *Merchant*. "Who and what are you?" The other replies, that to be sure he is a gentleman; that he has five hundred marks of landed revenue. The *Merchant* contends that he has

[1] A brief analysis of it may be found in Payne Collier's History of Dramatic Poetry, vol. ii. p. 319.

money enough to buy land equal in value; and that for whatever he has he is not indebted to his ancestors, but to his own merits. "Still," replied the *Knight*, "thou art but a churl!" "And what callest thou a *gentylman*?" demands the other: the reply, of course was, that a gentleman is one who is

"Born to grete landys by inherytaunce,
As myn auncestours by contynuance
Have had this five hundred yere: of whom now I
Am desendid and commyn lynally,
Beryng the same name and armys also,
That they bare this five hundred yere agoo.
Myn auncestours, also, have ever be
Lordys, knyghtes, and in grete auctoryte—
Capteyns in the warr and governers,
And also, in tyme of peace, gret rulers:
And thyn were never but artyfycers —
As smyths, masons, carpenturs, or wevars."

The *Merchant*, no way intimidated by this pedigree, contends, that the true gentleman is he who gives liberally from his own store; and that the true churl is he who receives from another without giving any thing in return. *His* ancestors had built houses, manufactured armour and clothing for those of the *Knight*; his, therefore, were the gentlemen; the *Knight*'s were the churls. The other denied the premises,

"That ever the ancestours of thyne
Did ever gyf to the ancestours of myne
At any tyme any thyng except that they
Gafe somewhat therefor, either ware or money."

The *Merchant* insists, and with justice, on his first position: does not the very money come from the hands of "artificers," who dig the precious metals from the bowels of the earth for the use of "lordys?" Are not wool and skins, and every other material transformed into garments by the skill and industry of the mechanic? Driven from this intrenchment, the *Knight* contends that it should be so, since the gentry have the greater information, and therefore are able to keep the lower orders in subjection.

"For reason wyse ever it should so be,
Wyse men to have folys in captyvyte."

Here, as the reader must perceive, the man of arms was more unfortunate than before; for the *Merchant* had no difficulty in proving that if knowledge is to be the test of nobility, it must rest with those to whom the world is indebted for the necessaries of life. His ancestors were the producers; those of the *Knight* the consumers. In vain does the latter reply that his forefathers had the mental superiority, and for this they were appointed to high places, — to be generals, governors, or "justiciaries,"—invested with power over those of the *Merchant*. The other denies the assertion.

"Nay, nay! thyne auncestours cam never all
To auctoryte for wysdom, princypall;
For though some were wise, yet some of them agayne
Had small discression, lytyll wyt in breyn:
But because of the long contynuaunce
Of theyr grete possessions by enherytaunce,
By the folysh maner of the world we see,
For that cause ever they nede had auctoryte."

This is a bold sentiment for such a period. There is, however, more weight in the rejoinder of the *Knight* than we should have expected. He asserts that the law of inheritance is founded in justice, since he who by superior services or merits has acquired any thing, has a right to transmit it to his descendants in preference to strangers. But a third speaker, the *Ploughman*, is now introduced, and is intended to bear away the palm of the controversy, in spite of either. With great contempt he exclaims,—

"Now here is bybbyle babbyle, clytter clatter!
I heard never of so foolysh a matter.
But by Goddys body! to speke the truth,
I am better than other of you bothe!"

To hear this from a ploughman is as insulting to the merchant as it is to the noble.

"*Knight.*

"Avaunt, kankerde churle! fro whence comest thou?

"*Plowman.*

"Mary, folysh, pevysh daw! even fro my plow.
How sayst? woldyst any thing therewithall?

"*Merchant.*

"Ye, mercy! thou lewyd vyllayn and rud raskale!
It is for this fole yll besemyng
To perturb any gentylmen's talkyng!"

But the rustic is not to be daunted.

"Gentylmen! ye gentylmen! Jak Heryng!
Put your shone in your bosom for weryng!
I accompt myself, — by Goddys body!
Better than you both, and more worthy!"

Here the *Knight* loses all patience; but he has to deal with one whom nature has favoured more than himself:

"Avaunt, beware! Get the' out of the gate!
Or I shall lay my sworde on thy pate."

"*Plowman.*

"That I shall prove, I make God a vowe:
Never in better tyme — have at the' now!"

Et verberat eos, says the stage direction. The application of the whip, by hands so capable of wielding it, has its effect: it is borne by the two without any attempt at retaliation. On the contrary, they cry for mercy while they reason the matter with him. He has now proved one thing, the physical superiority of the labourer over the merchant and the knight. He now proceeds to establish another point, — his superiority in usefulness, and consequently in nobility, to both. Nothing can equal the contempt with which the sturdy hind listens to the prating of the "two fools." Having heard their respective arguments, he demands —

"Which is the noblest thinge that can be?
Is not it the noblest thyng indede
That of all other thynges hath the least nede?
As God, reyneth etern in blysse —
Is not the noblest thyng that is?"

Of course, neither can deny the truth involved in the question, and the *Ploughman* proceeds:

" Well then, there is no reason why
But because He is the thyng Omnipotent,
And is in himself so suffycyent,
And nedeth the helpe of no nether thyng
To the helpe of his gloryous beyng,
But every other thynge hath nede of his ayde.

" *Merchant.*
" Mercy, that is very trough, and well sayde! "

In the same strain he proceeds to show that whilst the merchant and knight cannot live without him, he can very well dispense with them; ergo, he is the most noble. This kind of reasoning continued through several pages, the advantage being all in favour of the ploughman, who quotes the very words used by the rebel chief, John Ball:

" For when Adam dolf and Eve span,
Who was then a gentleman?"

In another place he proves that if the virtues be any marks of nobility, and the vices any tokens of meanness, the ploughman is the noble; since he is excluded alike by his industry and his intention from the temptations to which the knight and the merchant are exposed.

There are many acute observations in the piece, the freedom of which must strike the more powerfully when we remark that they were suffered to appear in the reign of the eighth Henry. They contain, indeed, much of the spirit which had animated the subjects of the second Richard, and which was a necessary consequence of the doctrines inculcated by Wycliffe[1]; yet it may be doubted whether they were not copied by one who had sufficient reverence for civil authority and for social institutions. They seem levelled merely at the pride which would spurn the humbler ranks; and were chiefly designed to remove the contempt which the high-born, the powerful, and the rich had so long en-

[1] Europe during the Middle Ages (CAB. CYC.) vol. iv.

tertained for the poor. They prove that if honour in this world were to be measured by utility, a greater portion must of necessity belong to the producer than to the consumer; that the prosperity of a state must depend on the industry of the labouring classes; and that if other professions are necessary, or at best adviseable, they have their foundation in agriculture and the useful arts. The lesson, alike moral and political, thus inculcated, was peculiarly applicable at a time when childish foppery was universally prevalent in the higher orders; when money was expended in court dress sufficient to impoverish the most affluent.[1] The aim of the writer was, therefore, salutary; and would that it had had its due effect! But this gewgaw display was as conspicuous in the following reigns as in that of Henry.

With the other works of John Rastall we have here no concern. From what we have already said it will appear — always assuming that he was the author of the interlude first noticed — that if he had few claims to the character either of a dramatist or a poet, he is distinguished for good sense, for justness of reflection, for acuteness of remark. When, indeed, we contrast his sound views of social life — its character, duties, obligations, and social interests — with the despotism which then filled the throne, with the slavish notions of aristocratic no less than of regal privileges, entertained by the nation, we must regard him as a phenomenon. It is for this consideration only that we have noticed him or his works.

John Bale.—This celebrated man was a native of Cove, a small village near Dunwich in Suffolk, where he was born in 1495. His parents were poor, and burdened with a large family; but this circumstance, which in modern

[1] Of this humiliating fact there is evidence enough in the first volume of the Antiquarian Repertory.

times would be so fatal to one in his condition, did not prevent him from acquiring whatever learning his country could afford. In his twelfth year he was admitted into the Carmelite monastery at Norwich, where he laid the foundation of his future knowledge; and by that monastery he was sent, for his greater improvement, to that of Holm near Alnwick, the chief, as it was the most ancient, of the order in England. For this advantage he might have been expected to feel some gratitude, and to have used more decent expressions than "in Carmelitani monachatûs *barathrum* detrudebar." Here he professed as monk; and, with the view of qualifying himself for the priesthood, was despatched from his convent to Cambridge, where he abode some years. How he discharged his clerical functions we are not informed; but that he was a diligent student and a laborious writer, is evident from the list of his numerous works previous to his conversion from the Roman catholic faith.[1] With the time of that conversion we are unacquainted: we know only that it was during his residence at college and his connection with lord Wentworth; probably after the year 1530. Its causes are still more doubtful: he himself assures us that he was instigated to serious reflection on the subject by that nobleman. Probably another person was more eloquent than his lordship, "the faithful Dorothy," whom he married[2], that, to use his own words, he might never more serve "so detestable a beast as the Romish church."[3] This step,

1 He himself enumerates thirty-eight; but they were small compilations.

2 Such, at least, was the surmise of bishop Nicholson

3 The whole passage deserves transcribing: — "In omni literarum barbarie, ac mentis cæcitate, illic et Cantabrigiæ pervagabar, nullum habens tutorem aut Mæcenatem: donec, lucente Dei verbo, ecclesiæ revocari cœpissent ad veræ theologiæ purissimos fontes. In eo autem splendore ortus novi Hierusalem, non a monacho aut sacerdote vocatus; sed ab illustri domino Wenfordo, tanquam a centurione illo qui Christum Dei filium esse dicebat, serio excitatus, deformitatem meam quam primum vidi et agnovi, protinusque, divina bonitate, ab arido monte in floridam ac fœcundam Evangelii vallem transferebar; ubi omnia reperi, non in arena, sed supra solidam petram ædificata. Unde scelestissimi Antichristi characterem (that of the priesthood) illico abrasi, jugaque ejus omnia a me longe pro-

indeed, in a priest and a monk, effectually closed the church to all reconciliation with it, and inevitably led to his persecution by the most zealous of its members. Two in particular, Stokesley of London (1530—1539), and Lee of York (1531—1544), pursued him with so much severity that he was glad to seek the protection of Cromwell, the powerful favourite of Henry VIII. Whatever might have been his inducements to the change, we must not forget that it was made in his mature years, in the vigour of his intellect, and that he adhered through life to the faith which he thus deliberately embraced with unerring constancy. On the death of Cromwell (1540), he fled into the Low Countries, where he remained (not idle, but employed in literary pursuits) until the accession of Edward VI. (1547). Such a man, in the distribution of church preferment, was not likely to be overlooked; and he was, accordingly, presented with the living of Bishopstoke near Southampton. Here he remained until 1552, when, hearing that the king was at Southampton, he mounted his horse, rode to the town, paid his respects to Edward, and was immediately nominated to the vacant see of Ossory. He protests (probably with great truth), that the dignity was unsought by him; that it was even forced on him. He had arrived at his fifty-seventh year; he had long been afflicted with ill health; and had always been distinguished for his love of retirement; and it is difficult to imagine that, in such circumstances, he should wish to enter on a laborious see, in a disturbed, hostile country. The choice, however, was not a happy one. Bale had suffered from the Roman catholics, and he, in consequence, regarded them with animosity: he was an intolerant professor of the new faith; and, even in things indifferent, was resolved

jeci, ut essem in sortem et libertatem datus filiorum Dei. Et, ne deinceps in aliquo essem tam execrabilis bestiæ creatura, uxorem accepi Dorotheam fidelem, divinæ huic voci auscultans. *Qui non continet, nubat.*

to admit no compromise between his opinions and worldly policy. Of his unbending disposition he exhibited a characteristic proof soon after his arrival in Dublin: he refused to be consecrated according to the rubric of Henry VIII., but according to that of the reigning king, which had not yet been received by the Irish parliament. This, however, was trifling, compared with his imprudence, after his consecration, in his cathedral. Instead of endeavouring, by gentle means, to conciliate the prejudices of those who adhered to the ancient faith, he appears to have delighted in exasperating them. That in his efforts to abolish the mass, and to introduce the English Common Prayer Book, he should meet with determined opposition, was to be expected. Well has it been said of him on this occasion, that "he insulted the prejudices of his flock without reserve or caution." They were provoked, and not so restrained nor awed by the civil power as to dissemble their resentment. During the short period of his residence in Ireland he lived in a continual state of fear and persecution. On his first preaching the reformed doctrines his clergy forsook or opposed him; and to such violence were the population incited against him, that five of his domestics were slain before his face, and his own life saved only by the vigorous interposition of the civil magistrate.

These outrages are pathetically related; but we are not informed what imprudences provoked them, or what was the intemperate conduct which his adversaries retorted with such "shocking barbarity." These excesses appear to have happened about the time of queen Mary's accession. Convinced from other circumstances that his life was in danger, he secretly fled from his diocese, hid himself in Dublin, and embarked in a small trading vessel in the hope of escaping to the continent. He was taken prisoner by the captain of a Dutch frigate, who rifled him of all he possessed. Twice, too, in his passage (at St. Ives in Cornwall, and at Dover), he was in imminent danger of being

delivered over to the royal council; but, in the first instance, his own address—in the second, the cupidity of the captain—averted his fate. Being carried to Holland, he was not liberated without a ransom which he had some difficulty in raising. From thence he repaired to Switzerland, where he remained during the short reign of Mary. On the accession of Elizabeth he returned to England; but of Ireland he would hear no more. Probably he expected an English bishopric; but all he could obtain was a prebendal stall in Canterbury cathedral; nor even this before the year 1560. Dr. Fuller expresses surprise that one so learned, and who had suffered so much for religion, should not have obtained higher promotion at a time when competent persons were not easily found to fill the vacant sees; but he gives a sufficient reason when he adds, that "that churchman was probably more learned than discreet, more fit to write than to govern, and so unable to command his own temper that he was generally called Bilious Bale." He had not long need of worldly patrons: he died four years after his appointment to the cathedral dignity.[1]

Bale was a voluminous writer; but only four of his works have been published. The first of them are on subjects sufficiently revolting, in an age, like the present, of religious indifference. After his conversion, his pen was as active as before; but he will be known to posterity only for his great biographical work,—"De Scriptoribus Illustribus Majoris Britanniæ." In the main, however, this biography is little more than an amplification of Leland. What is original is abusive. It appears to have been undertaken for no other purpose than to assail the characters which the Roman catholic church delighted to honour, and of which many

* Balæus, De Scriptoribus Illustribus Majoris Britanniæ, cent. viii. cap. ult. Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the Bishopricke of Ossorie (as cited in the Biographia Britannica). Fuller, Worthies of England, Suffolk, p. 61. Biographia Brit., vol. i. p. 542., edit Kippis. Nicholson's English Historical Library, part 2. cap. 8. Leland, History of Ireland, vol. i. p. 200. Blunt, Censura Celebriorum Auctorum, p. 481.

must be equally honoured by the whole Christian world, so long as virtues and talent are held in esteem amongst men. Take, for instance, Benedict Biscop, Aldhelm, Wilfred, Boniface, Lanfranc (men who, for moral and intellectual greatness, must be revered till time is no more), and his purpose must be sufficiently visible. In some lives[1], as Odo's, Dunstan's, and Wycliffe's, he is perfectly rabid. In short, whenever he has occasion to speak of men who, whatever their virtues, were connected with the Roman see, he treats them with the most opprobrious, often with the most disgusting epithets; and whenever he introduces a person who has at any time — no matter from what motive — offended the pope, bishops, and monks, he invests him with every admirable quality of mind and heart. On this subject Pitts, his successor in the biography of our writers, is scarcely too strong. "Hic Lelandi Catalogum tum prolixe auxit quam prodigiose depravavit. Omnia namque fœdissimis mendaciis et calumniis replevit, et opus Lelandi pollutissime styli turpitudine compurgavit. Ille miser homuncio prætor calumnias in homines, et blasphemias in Deum et sanctos nihil habet suum quod notatu dignum judico." This, it may be said, is the language of a bigoted papist, and so, indeed, it is; but candid protestants have not spared him. Thus, Vossius accuses him of dishonesty; thus, Wharton, the learned editor of "Angliæ Sacræ," says that he paid little regard to the truth, provided he could increase the enemies of the Roman church; thus, also, bishop Nicholson tells us that the foundation of his work is Leland's, and that the superstructure consists chiefly of "malicious and bitter invectives against the papists." And Mr. Harrington, who wrote the preface to the first volume of Wood's "Athenæ Oxonienses," justly observes, "All good antiquaries — men of enlarged souls, and of an even temper,

[1] Take Becket's for a sample: "Thomas Becket, Anglus, ex parentibus superstitionis genitus," &c.

however of divers professions — have always been of the same principles: they all equally sacrificed to truth and learning, and suffered not their private opinions to put a bias in their history. And whoever will compare the centuries of Bale and Pitts with the excellent works of Leland and Camden, must necessarily discern how near an alliance there is between zeal and ignorance, and between learning and modesty." We may add, how great the difference between the erudition of Anthony à Wood, and the rash confidence of the unscrupulous Bale! "In scriptis," says sir James Ware, "effrenata suus est libertate." Nor is Warton the historian of our poetry more friendly to him:—"But this work, perhaps originally undertaken by Bale as a vehicle of his sentiments in religion, is not only full of misrepresentations and partialities arising from his religious prejudice, but of great inaccuracies proceeding from negligence or misinformation. Even those more ancient lives which he transcribes from Leland's commentary on the same subject, are often interpolated with false facts, and impertinently marked with a misapplied zeal for reformation. He is angry with many authors who flourished before the thirteenth century for being catholics." The true secret, indeed, of his incessant rage against every one held in repute by the rival communion must be sought in the persecutions he had sustained from it; but will this excuse dishonesty, nay, downright knavery? If that be not knavery which suppresses every fact honourable to a person; which, where blame may possibly exist, exaggerates it a thousand fold; which, where two causes may equally have produced an event, invariably adopts the one least creditable to religion and to human nature; which, where unworthy motives cannot be found, will not hesitate to invent them; — then language ceases to be the instrument of knowledge among men. As a biographer, we dismiss Bale with that execration he deserves; convinced that there exist but three men in all England who, at the present day, would venture to assert

one word in his favour: — Philpots of Exeter, Faber of Sherburn, and Townsend of Durham.[1]

But, though a biography of Bale could not well omit to notice the only work for which he is generally known, our present business is with his dramas. Of these he composed eleven or twelve; yet three only have been printed. To enumerate the subjects of all would be useless, as they will never see the light, and no mortal patience will suffice to wade through the MSS. They are all religious mysteries; but they have neither the simplicity nor the invention of the Chester, the Towneley, or the Coventry plays. Referring the more curious reader for the perusal of one of them, *St. John the Baptist preaching in the Wilderness*, to the Harleian Miscellany, we present him with a short account of another, "*A Tragedye or Enterlude, manyfesting the chefe Promyses of God unto man in all ages of the olde Lawe, from the fall of Adam to the Incarnacyon of the Lorde Jesus Christ.*[2]

This "tragedye" is in seven acts, corresponding to the seven promises vouchsafed by the Almighty to his servants; the first, which was made to Adam after his fall, has reference to the coming of our Saviour, and to his victory over the Serpent; the second, to Noah, exempts him from the common destruction of mankind; the third was made to Abraham, that if ten righteous persons only could be found in Sodom, the city should be spared; and that the nations of the earth should be blessed in his posterity; the fourth, to Moses, while condemning the idolatrous Israelites, assures the coming of a mightier prophet than himself, — one who should, indeed, save Israel; the fifth, to David, while he is threatened with punishment for his

[1] Blunt, Censura Celebriorum Auctorum, p. 481. Bale, De Scriptoribus Illustribus Majoris Britanniæ (in Vitis SS. Supradictorum). Pitsæus, Dedicatio Scriptorum Britannica, p. 9. Vossius, De Historicis Latini, lib. ii. cap. 15. Wharton, Angliæ Sacræ, tom. i. pp. 31. 47. Harrison, Preface to Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses, vol. i., edit. Bliss. Biographia Britannica, vol. i. p. 535. Waræus, Hiberniæ Sacræ, p. 168. Warton, History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 363. edit. 8vo.

[2] Dodsley's Old Plays, vol. i.

conduct in regard to Uriah and Bathsheba, assures him that the long expected prophet shall issue from his own male line; the sixth, to Isaiah, more particularly regards the birth and character of the great Immanuel; the seventh, to St. John the Baptist, foretells that the Mighty One is about to appear, and that John shall have the honour of baptising Him in the river Jordan. From this enumeration of the "Acts," it will be seen that no writer could have been more unhappy in the choice of his subjects. They are, indeed, too awful for our contemplation elsewhere than in the house of God, and otherwise than in the humblest frame of mind. The way in which they are treated is so far below the dignity of the matter, that it must cause them to be regarded with less reverence than they demand; and must, consequently, be injurious to the spirit of devotion. There is not one passage which corresponds with the importance of the subject, nor one which does not exhibit lamentable degradation, when compared with the energetic, often sublime, simplicity of the holy Scriptures.

Nicholas Udall should have no place in the present volume were he not the author of the first regular comedy in our language. All that we know of his life is, that he was a native of Hampshire; that, in 1520, he was matriculated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford; that he was successively master of Eton and of Westminster schools; that he was vicar of a living in Essex, which living he resigned for the rectory of Colbourne, in the Isle of Wight; that he complied with the religious changes of the times, being in the beginning of king Edward's reign confirmed in the livings he held, and presented in addition with a canonry of Windsor; that he translated some things of Erasmus, especially that great scholar's Paraphrase on the Gospel of St. Luke; and

that he was the author of comedies, epistles, and verses, elegant enough to obtain the praises of Leland and Bale. Of these comedies one only is known to exist, and it was discovered so late as 1818: it is that which we have characterised as the first regular attempt of the kind in our language, and is called, "Ralph Roister Doister." It is, however, not before us; and, if it were, we should not be disposed to notice it, at any length, after the ample analysis given of it by an indefatigable modern writer. To him we refer the reader.[1]

III. We now come to the Life of *Merry John Heywood*, whose name has served as an excuse for the present dissertation. He was a native of London, but the year of his birth is unknown. It is equally doubtful whether he was educated for any profession; for, though he studied at Oxford, he appears to have left that university before the usual time, and without any qualification for the great business of life. The crabbedness of logic, says Anthony à Wood, did not suit his easy genius. He was, indeed, of a social, festive genius, the favourite, we are told, of Henry VIII., and afterwards of his daughter, queen Mary. For this introduction at court he was, doubtless, indebted to his friend, the celebrated sir Thomas More, with whom he was a neighbour, both at London and at his country residence at North Mims, near St. Alban's. Henry is said to have received him for his powers of entertainment; but, though he was at the court of Edward VI., he could scarcely be a favourite with that juvenile monarch: but, in the following reign, he was again the amusement of royalty; being alike, for his attachment to the ancient faith, and for his facetious talent, a welcome visitor of that queen, whose rigid muscles were often relaxed at his sallies. Of these, time has spared a few, which may serve to

[1] See Mr. Payne Collier, History of Dramatic Poetry.

exhibit both his peculiar character and his familiarity with his sovereign. "What wind has blown you to court?" was her demand one day, on seeing him approach. "Two winds," was the reply. "What are they?" "One that I might have the pleasure of seeing your grace." "We thank you for that: what is the other?" "That your grace might have the pleasure of seeing me!" On another occasion, when Mary expressed her determination to prevent the clergy from having wives, he replied, with a pun: "Then your grace must allow them lemans, for they cannot live without sauce!" Even on her death-bed, Heywood was admitted to her chamber to soothe the languor of decaying nature. After her demise he was not without apprehensions for the future. Once already he had been in jeopardy; and, considering that he should be obnoxious on two accounts, — as a papist, and as the favourite of the deceased queen, — he retired from the kingdom, and passed the remainder of his days in exile. This fact is honourable to his memory: had he chosen to be as complying in religious matters as most of his countrymen, he might have remained in safety. "It is wonder to some," says the author of the "Athenæ Oxonienses," who will allow no religion to poets, "that this person, above all of his profession, be a voluntary exile for it." He died at Mechlin, in Brabant, in 1565. Of his children, all carefully reared in his own faith, two were priests in the order of Jesus: one of them, Gaspar, is well known as the translator of three plays of Seneca, and as the author of several poetical effusions in the "Paradise of Dainty Devises." Fuller asserts that he was executed in the reign of Elizabeth; but this is contradicted by the positive testimony of his friend Pitts, who associated with him at Naples in 1598.[1]

John Heywood was most celebrated as an epigrammatist. His pieces (six hundred in number) are not before us; but, if we are to adopt the opinion of War-

[1] Authorities: — Pitts, Anthony à Wood, Dodsley, Warton.

ton, we have no reason to lament this circumstance. "They are, probably," says that writer, "some of his gibes versified; and, perhaps, were often extemporaneous sallies made and repeated in company. Wit and humour are ever found in proportion to the progress of politeness. The miserable drolleries and contemptible quibbles with which these little pieces are pointed, indicate the great want of refinement, not only in the composition, but in the conversation of our courtiers." Whether this severe judgment is deserved may be doubted, even from the specimens adduced by the historian; but that passed on Heywood's comedies is extremely unjust. "His comedies, most of which appeared before the year 1534, are destitute of plot, humour, or character, and give us no very high opinion of the festivity of this agreeable companion." How far this Oxford critic is correct, the reader shall now be called to judge.[1]

We have already seen that John Heywood was a zealous catholic: it is a greater pleasure to observe that he was wholly free from the narrow prejudices entertained by too many members of that faith. No man was more sensible of the abuses which the mendicant orders were daily committing, and no man was more ready to resist them. With him, friar is but another word for a rogue, yet even a friar is, in this respect inferior to a pardoner, viz., to one who sold certain relics which were pretended to have a wonderful efficacy in the pardon of sin, and in averting the dangers common to us all. In this respect, he was much of Chaucer's spirit, who regarded pardoners with as much dislike as himself, though he did not assail them so vigorously. His "*Merry Play between a Pardoner and a Frere, the Curate and Neybour Pratte,*" which appeared long before the proclamation of Henry VIII. against those pests of religion [2], will show how

[1] Warton, History of English Poetry.

[2] 28 Henry VIII. The proclamation in question has one clause against "dyvers and sundry light persons called *pardoners*," stating that the money "unlawfully by them exacted of the poore innocent people, by colour of their indulgences, they spend in ribaldry and carnal vices, carrying

much the minds of our ancestors had advanced from the days of Chaucer to those of Heywood. A pardoner and a friar (frere), while on their knavish missions from parish to parish, demand leave of a certain rector (curate) to use his church,— the former to display his relics, the latter to preach, — both with the same view, to plunder the ignorant dupes. It was not to be expected that these brothers in roguery could agree: no sooner is the friar about to commence his discourse than the pardoner enters, and, knowing that the first speaker must have the advantage, interrupts his rival. The friar insists on his right as the first comer; the pardoner will not listen to him: a dispute ensues; each raises his voice, in the hope of drowning the appeal of the other: they quarrel in high terms, much to the edification of the beholders, and at length fairly engage in a pitched battle. In vain does the curate endeavour to separate the combatants: he calls on one of the congregation, neighbour Pratte, to help him in clearing the church of the knaves. Pratte seizes the pardoner, the curate the friar: a battle between the four adds to the scandal of the scene; but the two strangers, who are, doubtless, more experienced in such pugilistic exercise, inflict on the poor curate and his friend so sound a drubbing, that they are quietly suffered to depart. During the fracas the friends of the two worthies are depicted with humour, gross indeed, but for that reason the more effectual. The *friar,* while expatiating on the voluntary severity of his order, and on the evil of riches, intimates that his discourse will close with a collection. The *pardoner* exhibits his relics so absurdly as to bring ridicule on the whole system. He has "the great toe of the Holy Family, which, when put in the mouth, is an infallible cure for the toothache. Next comes the bongrace, and French head of our lady; and lastly, the blessed jaw-bone of All-

about with them drabbes, hoores, and cutte-purses, to the great slander of the realme, and the damage, deceit, and impoverishing of the king's good loving subjects." Bluff Henry would have no other robber than himself.

saints!" It is not the least characteristic of this play, that, whilst the three ecclesiastics indulge in the most frequent and most blasphemous oaths, Pratte the layman, wholly refrains from them.[1]

But Heywood did not satisfy himself with exposing the heresies of friars only: he does not spare the regular clergy. In the "*Merry Play betweene Johan the husbande, Tyb the wyfe, and Sir Johan the Preest*," we have a picture, — let us hope an exaggerated one, — of the Roman catholic clergy in the rural districts of England, long before the Reformation. Johan is the slave of his wife: so far from contradicting her, he dares not have a will of his own. While she is absent, however, he is valiant enough: he boasts, from the very opening of the piece, how very well he governs his wife; and is threatening a severe castigation for her the moment she returns, when she unexpectedly enters, and hearing his blustering, demands whom he intends to beat?

"*Johan.*

"Who, I Tyb? None, — so God me save!

"*Tyb.*

"Yes! — I harde thee say thou wouldst one bete.

"*Johan.*

"Mercy, wife! it was stockfysshe, in Temmes Strete,
Which will be good meate agaynst Lente."

This is ludicrous enough, and, though farcical, surely *humorous* enough to justify the injustice of Warton's censures. What follows is, though more broad, equally characteristic. Tyb complains of sickness — the result, as Johan rightly suspects, of her drinking with Johan the priest. She produces a pie made by herself, the priest, and a gossip in the neighbourhood, and so delicate that the husband is commanded to invite sir Johan to supper. He obeys with a little reluctance, which, how-

[1] "Imprynted by Wyllyam Rastell, the v. day of Apryll, the yere of our Lorde 1533." The drama, however, must have been *composed* long before, as Leo X., who died in 1521, is spoken of as still living.

ever, he is careful to conceal from Tyb. The priest arrives, and Johan is ordered to fetch water from the well, that both his wife and her guest may wash their hands before eating. Again, he obeys with apparent alacrity, but with more inward reluctance, since he is more than ever convinced that his wife has been false with the jolly priest. That his conviction is well founded, appears from the gibes, laughs, and winks of the two, the moment he has left the house. He soon returns complaining that the pail will not hold water: he is provided with wax to mend it; and, while he is thus employed, the pie is demolished before his face, without his being permitted to approach the table. This is more than flesh and blood can bear; and in a rage he throws down the pail. For his boldness he is soundly belaboured by his wife and sir Johan, until the "blood runs about his eyes." Both then leave him to his reflections; and it strikes him that they are gone "to make him a cuckold." He follows to see whether they will "do him any villany;" and thus the farce ends.[1]

But the drama which will best illustrate the peculiar genius of Heywood is that of the "Four P's," which is a dialogue between a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Poticary, and a Pedlar. Four such knaves afforded so humorous a man as the author abundant materials for satire, and he has improved them to some advantage. The piece opens with the Palmer, who boasts of his peregrinations to the Holy Land, to Rome, to Santiago, in Spain, and to a score of shrines besides; in fact, he has been all over the world. This boasting is interrupted by the *Pardoner*, who tells him that he has been foolish to give himself so much trouble, when he might have obtained the object of his journey,—the pardon of his sins,—at home:—

"For at your dore myselfe doth dwell,
Who could have saved your soul as well
As all your wyde wandrynge shall do,
Though ye went thrice to Jericho."

1 Payne Collier, vol. ii. p. 398.

The Palmer will not hear his labours thus disparaged; and he falls on the imposture of relic venders: —

"Ryght seldom is it seen, or never,
"That truth and Pardoners dwell together."

The Pardoner retorts by the old proverb, "Qui vient de loin peut menter;" rails at the folly of pilgrimages, and asserts in strong terms the virtues of his spiritual nostrums:

"With small cost, and without any payne,
These pardons bryng them to heaven playne:
Geve me but a penny or two pens
And as son as the soule departeth hens
In half an houre, or three quarters at moste,
The soule is in heaven with the Holy Ghost."

This language is very characteristic of the honest old catholic, who, however attached to his faith, was as ready as any protestant to assail the abuses that had crept into the discipline and practice of his church. The *Poticary* now speaks, and is resolved to have his share of merit. Of what avail the wanderings of the one or the relics of the other, until the soul is separated from the body? and who sends so many into the other world as the apothecary? Except such as may happen to be hanged — which, for any thing he knows, may be the fate of the Palmer and the Pardoner — who dies by any other help than the apothecary's? As, therefore, it is he who fills heaven with inmates, who so much entitled to the gratitude of mankind? The Pardoner is here indignant, and asks what is the benefit of dying, — what, consequently, the use of an apothecary, even should he kill a thousand in a day, to men who are not in a state of grace? And what, retorts the other, would be the use of a thousand pardons being round the neck, unless people died? The *Poticary*, who is the most sensible of the three, concludes that all of them are rogues, when the Pedlar makes his appearance; and he exclaims, —

" Now, on my faith, full well matched!
Where the dyvel were we four hatched?"

The Pedlar, like his companions, commends his wares. How can there be any love without courtship? and how can women be won without such tempting gifts as are contained in his sack?

" Who lyveth in love and love would wynn,
Even at this packe he must begynne."

He can even accommodate "father Palmer," who he suspects must have a wanton in some corner. The dialogue which immediately follows is too gross to be noticed. Again the Pedlar displays his wares and intreats them to buy: but churchmen are beggars, not buyers, and the *Poticary* is no less cunning. At length the *Pardoner* reverts to the subject of conversation when the Pedlar entered, and, in the view of eliciting the opinion of the last comer, details the arguments of himself and his two companions, the *Palmer* and the *Poticary*. The Pedlar seems at first surprised that the profession of an apothecary is to kill men, and thinks the world may very well do without one: but the other assures him that he is under a mistake; that the *Poticary* is most useful, and for this notable reason, that when any man feels that his "conscience is ready," all that he has to do is to send for the practitioner, who will, at once, dispatch him to heaven.

Weary of their disputes for pre-eminence of merit and usefulness, the Pedlar proposes that the other three shall strive for the mastery by *lying*, and that the greatest liar shall be recognised head of the rest. The task he imposes on them cannot, he is sure, be a heavy one, for all are used to it: —

" And all ye there can lye as well
As can the falsest devyll in hell."

The Palmer acknowledges that he knows something of the craft, but that he is unwilling to exercise it.

"*Pedler.*

"Ye have no cause to fear — be bolde,
For ye may here lie uncontroulde.
And ye in this have good avauntage,
For lyeng is your comen usage,
And you in lyeng be well spedde
For all your craft doth stande,
Ye nede not care who shall begyin,
For each of you may hope to wyn."

All three agree to make the trial in succession; and the Pardoner takes the lead by relating the virtues of his relics. "Here is the blessed jaw-bone of Allhallows! the great toe of the Trinity! the rump-bone of the Pentecost! the slipper of the Seven Sleepers! an eye tooth of the Grand Turk! a box of the very bees which stung mother Eve when she ate the forbidden fruit! a glass of the very liquor served up at the wedding of Adam and Eve!" The absurd names are well adapted to express the absurdity of the system. We pass over the comments of the *Poticary*, which, though humorous, are too gross for insertion in the nineteenth century. The Poticary calls the *Palmer* an *honest* man, and the Pedlar confirms the lie: —

"*Pardoner.*

"Now lie ye both — by our lady!
Thou liest in boast of his honesty,
And he hath lied in affirming thee!"

These are both lies of sufficient magnitude; but, as the exact quantum of falsehood cannot be measured, the *Pedlar* proposes that each shall tell a tale; and he who tells the most wonderful and unlikely tale shall have the victory.

The *Poticary* commences; but his story is too gross for insertion, or even for allusion. The Pardoner follows —

"I have ben a pardoner many a day,
And done greater cures gostely,
Then ever he dyd bodely.
Namely thys one, whiche ye shall here,
Of one departed within thys seven yere,

A frende of myne, and lykewyse I
To her agayne was as frendly:
Who fell so syke so sodeynly,
That dede she was even by and by,
And never spake with preste nor clerke,
Nor had no whyt of thys holy warke;
For I was thens, it coulde nat be,
Yet harde I say she asked for me.
But when I bethought me howe thys chaunced,
And that I have to heven avaunced
So many soules to me but straungers,
And coude nat kepe my frende from daungers,
But she to dy so daungerously,
For her soule helth especyally;
That was the thynge that greved me soo,
That nothynge could release my woo,
Tyll I had tryed even out of hande,
In what estate her soule dyd stande.
For whiche tryall, shorte tale to make,
I toke thys journey for her sake.
Geve ear, for here begynneth the story:
From hens I went to purgatory.
And toke with me thys gere in my fyste,
Wherby I may do there what I lyste.
I knocked and was let in quyckly:
But Lorde, how lowe the soules made curtesy;
And I to every soule agayne
[1] Dyd gyve a beck them to retayne,
And axed them thys question than,
If that the soule of suche a woman
Dyd late amonge them there appere?
Wherto they sayd, she came nat here
Then ferd I muche it was nat well;
Alas, thought I, she is in hell;
For with her lyfe I was so acqueynted,
That sure I thought she was nat saynted.
With thys it chaunced me to snese;
Christe helpe, quoth a soule that ley for his fees.
Those wordes, quoth I, thou shalt nat lees;
Then with these pardons of all degrees,
I payed his tole and set hym so quyght,
That strayt to heaven he toke his flyght,

[1] "Dyd gyve a beck them to retayne." A *beck*, among other significations, has that of a salutation with the head. So, in Shakspeare's "Timon of Athens:"

"A serving of *becks*, and jutting out of bums."

And I from thens to hell that nyght,
To help this woman yf I myght;
Nat as who sayth by authorite,
But by the waye of entreate.
And fyrst to the devyll that kept the gate
I came and spake after this rate.
All hayle, syr devyll, and made lowe curtesy:
Welcome, quoth he, thus smillyngly.
He knew me well, and I at laste
Remembred him syns longe time paste:
For as good happe wolde have it chaunce,
This devyll and I were of olde acqueyntaunce;
[1] For oft, in the play of corpus Cristi,
He hath playd the devyll at Coventry.
By his acqueyntaunce and my behavoure,
He shewed to me ryght frendly favoure,
And to make my returne the shorter,
I sayd to this devyll, good mayster porter,
For all olde love, yf it lye in your power,
Helpe me to speke with my lorde and your.
Be sure, quoth he, no tongue can tell,
What tyme thon coudest have come so well:
For as on thys daye lucyfer fell,
Whiche is our festyvall in hell,
Nothynge unreasonable craved thys day,
That shall in hell have any nay.
But yet be ware thou come nat in,
Tyll tyme thou may thou pasporte wyn.
Wherfore stand styll, and I will wyt,
Yf I can get thy save condyt.
He taryed nat, but shortely gat it
Under seale, and the devyls hande at it,
In ample wyse, as ye shall here;
Thus it began: Lucyfere,
By the power of god chyefe devyll of hell,
To all the devyls that there do dwell,

[1] "For oft, in the play of corpus Cristi,
He hath playd the devyll at Coventry."

"Before the suppression of the monasteries, this city (i. e. Coventry) was very famous for the pageants that were play'd therein upon Corpus Christi day (this is one of their ancient faires), which occasioning very great confluence of people thither from far and near, was no small benefit thereto; which pageants being acted with mighty state and reverence by the friers of this house, had theaters for the several scenes very large and high, placed upon wheels, and drawn to all the eminent parts of the city, for the better advantage of spectators, and contained the story of the New Testament, composed in old English rithme, as appeareth by an ancient MS. entitled, "Ludus Corporis Christi," or "Ludus Coventriæ," in Bibl. Cotton. (sub Effigie Vesp. D. 9.)."—*Dugdale's Warwickshire*, p. 116.

And every of them we sende gretynge,
Under streyght charge and commaundynge,
That they aydynge and assystent be
To suche a Pardoner, and named me,
So that he may at lybertie
Passe save withont any jeopardy,
Tyll that he be from us extyncte,
And clerely out of helle's precincte.
And hys pardons to kepe in savegarde;
We wyll they lye in the porter's warde.
Gevyn in the fornes of our palys,
In our highe courte of maters of malys,
Suche a day and yere of our reyne.
God save the devyll, quoth I, amain.
I truste thys wrytynge to be sure:
Then put thy truste, quod he, in euer
Syns thou art sure to take no harme.
Thys devyll and I walket arme in arme,
So farre, tyll he had brought me thyther,
Where all the devylls of hell togyther
Stode in a ray, in suche apparell
As for that day there metely fell.
Theyr hornes well gylt, theyr clowes full clene,
Theyr taylles wel kempt, and, as I wene,
With sothery [1] butter theyr bodyes anoynted;
I never sawe devylls so well appoynted.
The mayster devyll sat in his jacket,
And all the soules were playinge at racket.
None other rackettes they hadde in hande,
Save every soule a good fyre brand;
Wherwith they played so pretely,
That Lucyfer laughed merely;
And all the resedew of the feends,
Did laugh thereat ful wel like freends.
But of my frende I sawe no whyt,
Nor durst not axe for her as yet.
Anone all this rout was brought in silens,
And I by an usher brought in presens
Of Lucyfer; then lowe, as wel I could,
I knelyd, whiche he so well alowde,
That thus he beckte, and by saynt Antony
He smyled on me well favouredly,
Bendynge his browes as brode as barne durres,
Shakynge hys eares as ruged as burres;

[1] Sothery, sweet or fresh made from the old word *sote.*

Rolynge his eyes as rounde as two bushels;
Flastynge the fyre out of his nose thryls;
Gnashinge hys teeth so vaynglorously,
That me thought tyme to fall to flatery.
Wherwith I tolde, as I shall tell.
O plesant pycture! O prince of hell!
Feutred [1] in fashyon abominable,
And syns that is inestimable
For me to prayse the morthyly,
I leve of prayse, as unworthy
To geve the prays, besechynge the
To heare my sewte, and then to be
So good to graunt the thynge I crave;
And to be shorte, thys wolde I have;
The soule of one which hyther is flytted,
Delivered hens, and to me remitted.
And in thys doynge though al be nat quyt,
Yet in some parte I shall deserve it,
As thus: I am a pardoner,
And over soules as controller,
Thorough out the erth my power doth stande,
Where many a soule lyeth on my hande,
That spede in maters as I use them,
As I receyve them or refuse them.
Whereby, what tyme thy pleasure is,
I shall requyte any part of thys,
The leste devyll here that can come thyther,
Shall chose a soule and brynge him hyther,
Ho, ho, quoth the devyll, we are well pleased;
What is hys name thou woldest have eased?
Noy, quoth I, be be it good or evyll,
My comynge is for a she devyll.
What calste her quoth he thou whoorson?
Forsooth quoth I Margery Coorson.
Now by our honour, sayd Lucyfer,
No devyll in hell shall witholde her;
And yf thou wouldest have twenty mo,
Wert not for justyce, they shulde goo.
For all we devylls within thys den
Have more to do with two women,
Then with all the charge we have besyde:
Wherfore yf thou our frende wyll be tryed,
Aply thy pardons to women so,
That unto us there come no mo.

[1] Feutred in fashyon abominable. *Feutrer*, Fr.—faire de *feutre*—garnir de *feutre*.—To stuff with *felt*. *Feutré* d'herbe, overgrown with grass.

To do my beste I promysed by othe;
Which I have kepte, for as the fayth goth
At thys day, to heven I do procure
Ten women to one man, be sure.
Then of Lucyfer my leve I toke,
And streyght unto the mayster coke
I was hadde, into the kechyn,
For Margerie's offyce was therin.
All thyngs handled there discretely,
For every soule bereth offyce metely
Woiche myght be sene to se her syt
So bysely turnynge of the spyt.
For many a spyt here hath she turned,
And many a good spyt hath she burned:
And many a spyt ful hoth hath rosted,
Before the meat coulde be halfe rosted
And or [1] the meate were halfe rosted in dede,
I toke her then fro the spyt with spede.
But when she sawe thys brought to pas,
To tell the joy wherin she was;
And of all the devylls, for joy how they
Did rore at her delyvery,
And how the cheynes in hell dyd rynge,
And how all the soules therin dyd synge;
And how we were brought to the gate,
And how we toke our leve therat,
Be suer lacke of tyme sufferyth nat
To reherse the xx parte of that,
Wherfore thys tale to conclude brevely.
Thys woman thanked me chyefly.
That she was ryd of thys endles deth,
And so we departed on newmarket heth.
And yf that any man do mynde her,
Who lyste to seke her, there shalle he fynde her." [2]

This is a respectable lie; but the Palmer is to be victorious:

" *Palmer.*

" His tale is all muche perilous;
But parte is muche mervaylous:
As where he sayde the devylls complayne,
That women put them to suche payne.
Be theyr condicions so croked and crabbed,
Frowardly fashonde, so wayward and wrabbed [3],

[1] Or, ere.
[2] Dodsley's Old Plays, vol. i. p. 94.
[3] Wayward and wrabbed. I suppose *wrabbed* to be a word coined for the sake of rhyme.

So farre in devision, and sturrynge suche stryfe,
That all the devylls be wery of theyr life.
This in effect he tolde for trueth.
Whereby muche marvell to me ensueth,
That women in hell suche shrewes can be,
And here so gentyll as farre as I se.
Yet have I sene many a myle,
And many a woman in the whyle.
Nat one good cytye, towne nor borough
In cristendom, but I have ben thorough,
And this I wolde ye shulde understande,
I have sene women v hundred thousande:
And oft with them have longe tyme taried
Yet in all places where I have ben,
Of all the women that I have sene,
I never sawe nor knewe in my conscyens,
Any one woman out of paciens."[1]

In comparison with this the Pardoner's lie, ingenious and satirical as it is, dwindles into perfect insignificance. Nothing can exceed the surprise of the other three at this astounding assertion, except the ingenuity with which they are made to express — unwillingly yet involuntarily — the Palmer's superiority in the most ancient and noble art of lying.

" *Poticary.*
" By the mass, there's a great lie!
" *Pardoner.*
" I never heard a greater — by our Lady!
" *Pedler.*
" A greater! nay, knew you any so great?"

We need offer no apology for the length of the preceding extract. The genuine humour; the sarcastic hits at the greatest impostors the world has ever seen — the sellers of indulgences; — the graphic descriptions equal any thing we remember to have read in our old literature. Who besides Warton could have read it, and said "there was no humour" in "Merry John Heywood?" All Oxford, with the historian of our poetry at their head, would have some difficulty, we suspect, in finding a tithe of it.

[1] Dodsley's Old Plays, vol. i. p. 95.

If we have praised this author's dramas, we have little to say in favour of his poems,—not even the Spider and the Fly. They have no imagination; no grace of language or of sentiment. His characteristic is broad coarse humour; a quick perception of the ridiculous; a quiet vein of sarcasm; and the art of displaying what may move the reader, in the strongest light. These qualities, however, do not pertain to his poetry, which we, therefore, dismiss without farther notice.

EDMUND SPENSER.

(1553—1599.)

The state of literature in England during the fifteenth century, notwithstanding that the progress of letters was exposed to a variety of checks, must be considered on the whole to have been favourable to the cultivation of English poetry. The interval between Chaucer and Surrey—who may be named without hesitation as the first writer, in order of time, of pure English verse—was certainly unproductive of any great or continuous efforts of genius. The example of Chaucer had made but a slight impression upon the age; and that example demands a more profound investigation than it has ever received, in reference to the extraordinary fact, that, although he and Gower were contemporaries at college, and that although Gower actually survived Chaucer, the poetry of the one is almost unintelligible to the bulk of mere English readers, while that of the other is accessible to any one who may think it worth while to expend a little patience upon its perusal. So much, indeed, has the ruggedness of Gower's lines, the uncouthness of his phraseology, and the general obscurity of his manner, thrown him out of the annals of English poetry, that even his biographers preserved but a few scanty memorials of his life, and his critics bestowed but little attention upon his works; while Chaucer has been illustrated by the researches of successive generations, and is still regarded with unabated enthusiasm. If any proof were required of the vast improvements which Chaucer effected in the language, it is furnished in the marvellous contrast that exists between his poems and those of Gower. At the period when

they both flourished, the art of versification was hardly known in England, or exhibited only in rude and unequal fragments; the phraseology was barbarous and unfixed, and the monotonous alliterations of the Saxon poets presented almost the only models to tempt imitation, or excite ambition. The felicitious genius of Chaucer, emancipating itself from the usages of the time, and deriving inspiration from Italy, and from Boccaccio in particular, informed the language of his country with new and unexpected graces. He reduced the chaos to order, and by the force of his creative intellect, which embraced within its sphere a fine perception of the music of numbers, an accurate and wide-reaching knowledge of life, an intense feeling of beauty, great dramatic power, and an exuberant imagination, he produced a series of poems, from which the harshness and crudeness of a mixed and indeterminate dialect were almost wholly excluded, and which, in purity of diction as well as melody of structure, surpassed all his contemporaries, and were equalled by his successors only after a long lapse of time. Gower, on the other hand, wrote in the barbarous language of the day, and, whatever may have been his merit in other respects, contributed nothing towards the improvement of literature. But after Chaucer there was a dreary blank. He had probably created a taste which rendered it difficult for inferior minds to raise themselves into notice; and as his works unquestionably anticipated the slow progress of refinement, it was not surprising that no distinguished poet should have arisen until the improvements which the language gradually received had come into general use. The introduction of the art of typography, which was liberally encouraged by the people, and applied almost exclusively to English books, and translations of the classics from French versions, and the diffusion of learning amongst the upper classes, produced insensible reformations, that prepared the language for those more elevated inventions, of which it was destined in the sixteenth century to become the medium. Towards the

close of the fifteenth century, the influence of these circumstances began to be felt, and poetry again took root. This era of transition encouraged the prospects of genius, and gave it an impulse which promised at last to lead to the establishment of an English style, freed from foreign barbarisms, and acquiring strength and refinement as it advanced.

The vernacular, until this period, was rarely employed by men of erudition, who, with scarcely a single exception, wrote in Latin. The illiterate alone resorted to the use of English, which they were incapable of polishing or invigorating. Their works were at once superficial and affected, and not only exhibited their entire ignorance of the sources from whence the means of enriching their language were to be obtained, but had an obvious tendency to generate fresh corruptions. Roger Ascham, one of the earliest amongst the learned who ventured to deviate from the custom of writing in Latin, describes with appropriate severity the gross impurities of those authors. "As for the Lattine or Greeke tongue," he observes in his Toxophilus, "euerye thinge is so excellentlye done in Them, that none can do better. In the Englishe tongue contrary, euerye thinge in a maner so meanlye, both for the matter and handelinge, that no man can do worse. For therein the learned for the most part haue bene alwayes most redye to write. And they which had least hope in Lattine haue bene most bould in Englishe: when surelye euerye man that is most redye to talke is not most able to write. He that will write well in any tongue, must folow this counsell of Aristotle; to speake as the common people do, to think as wise men do. And so shoulde euerye man understand him, and the iudgement of wise men alowe him. Manye Englishe writers haue not done so; but vsinge straunge wordes, as Lattine, French, and Italian, do make all thinges darke and harde. Ones I communed with a man, which reasoned the Englishe tongue to be enriched and encreased therebye, sayinge, Who will not prayse that feast where a man shall drincke

at a dinner both wyne, ale, and beere? Truly, quoth I, they be al good, euery one taken by himselfe alone; but if you put malmesye and sacke, redde wyn and white, ale and beere, and al in one pot, you shall make a drinke neither easye to be knowen, nor yet holsome for the bodye."[1] This accurate picture of the state of English literature — which, without much alteration, would apply to many works produced in our own time— sufficiently indicates the obstacles that retarded the progress of the language, and will in proportion assist us to a better appreciation of the merits of those writers whose productions contributed to the formation of a final standard of taste.

Surrey, whose love-verses may even now be regarded amongst the most exquisite specimens of that description of poetry in our language, succeeded Chaucer, after a long interval; and from his time until the appearance of Spenser, a space of thirty-seven years, the young spirit of national literature was successfully sustained by such writers as Sackville and Gascoigne. The reign of queen Mary, discouraging as it would appear to be, was remarkable for the triumphs of intellect over social calamity. While the prelates of the reformed faith were daily sacrificed to their inflexible integrity, and the whole

[1] Roger Ascham, in his Schoolemaster [1564], complains that there were "more of these vngracious bookes set out in print within these few monethes than have bene seene in England manye scote years before." Upon which Dr. Ashby remarks, that these ungracious books could not be recent productions of monasteries; which, we imagine, nobody except Dr. Ashby would have thought it necessary to state, as the works of the monasteries were of a very different character. But we are surprised to find a query added to this remark, which implies a doubt as to whether such books were written at all. It is needless to defend the veracity of honest Roger Ascham, who was one of the most plain-spoken, as well as learned, men of his time: but if authorities be necessary to establish beyond dispute the fact that at this period a great number of superficial books were written in affected and barbarous English, interspersed with foreign jargon, we have enough of them to set the question at rest. Wilson, in his Arte of Rhetorike, after laying down sundry laws for composition, censures the faults that at that time pervaded the writings of his contemporaries — amongst the most prominent of which were excessive alliteration, the affected employment of vowels at the close of one word and the beginning of the next, and the rejection of common and proper phrases for those that were curious and unintelligible. Wilson's opinions were adopted by Sherry and Fullwood; and, indeed, all the elementary writers of the period agree in reprobating the style which deformed the majority of English works of that age.

country was convulsed by a ferocious struggle, which, in the name of religion, violated the laws of God, it is a gratifying relief from the turbulence of the period to find that the few men of genius who embellished it by their learning and their virtues, stood aloof from the disgraceful contention, and continued to cultivate the art of poetry amidst the horrors of civil feud and polemical warfare. This fact alone may be assumed as a sufficient evidence that the people were already beginning to feel the influence of cultivation, and that the taste which was growing up amongst them could not be restrained even by the most disastrous political circumstances. A great impetus had been given to the public mind, and it was now taking its natural onward direction. Sackville meditated and commenced at this time a poetical work of such extensive scope, and high pretension, that we are justified in supposing the community to have made no inconsiderable progress in knowledge, as it is not likely his lordship would have projected so comprehensive a design unless he believed there were readers enough in the body of the people to reward his labours. It is true that in the middle ages, when there were comparatively no readers, great works were undertaken and completed in the solitudes of cloisters, and places remote from intercourse; but then it must be remembered that their authors were men who lived apart from the world, who were exclusively devoted to study, and who discovered in the employment of their erudition, and the exercise of their imagination, a grateful resource against the pains of loneliness. It was the pleasure of their lives to pour forth the pent-up feelings of their hearts in rich strains of poetry, and to mould into goodly and often capricious shapes the stores of learning they had accumulated through years of unremitting research. Such was not the case with Sackville, earl of Dorset. A minister, high in favour and in power, his ambition was abundantly crowned by worldly honours, and his yearnings for distinction, for present enjoyment and prospective fame, were satisfied in the

sunshine of the court, and the flattery of the world. That a man so favoured by fortune should have meditated so large a contribution to the literature of his day, is a satisfactory proof of the estimate he put upon the opinions of his countrymen, and justifies the inference that they had at least made some progress towards the acquisition of a critical taste.

This remarkable work — remarkable in plan and in extent — was solely originated by Thomas Sackville, first lord Buckhurst, and afterwards earl of Dorset; but it was intended to embrace contributions from all the distinguished writers of the time. It was entitled "The Mirrour of Magistrates."[1] The design was to include a poetical review of all the illustrious but unfortunate characters in English history, from the Conquest to the end of the fourteenth century. It was intended that each personage should recite his misfortunes in a distinct soliloquy; but the work was to be interspersed with tragedies, all of which were to be written by Sackville himself[2], who, in his Gorboduc, had produced one of the first regular tragedies in our language. The poet of the Mirrour was to descend, like Dante, into the infernal regions, conducted by Sorrow. Sackville, however, wanted either leisure or perseverance to prosecute this comprehensive undertaking; and after he had written the Induction, and one legend, the life of Henry Stafford, duke of Buckingham, he suddenly abandoned his labours, and committed their completion to the hands of Richard Baldwyne, an ecclesiastic, and George Ferrers, a man of rank and ability, who distinguished himself by a translation of the Magna Charta from French into Latin and English, by a history of the reign of queen Mary[3], and some accasional interludes, written for the diversion

[1] The last edition of this work was published in 1815, under the editorship of Mr. Haslewood, whose eccentric character has of late been severely analysed in connection with the Roxburg club. That edition was printed from the edition of 1587, and collated with those of 1559, 63, 71, 75, 78, and 1610.

[2] Park.

[3] This work, which forms a part of Grafton's Chronicle, is attributed to Ferrers, upon good authority. *Stowe, Chron.*

of the court. Baldwyne and Ferrers, who probably felt themselves inadequate to the task of gathering and versifying such a collection of histories, called in the assistance of Churchyard and Phayer; and selecting their subjects chiefly from the recent chronicles of Fabyan and Hall, and the wars of York and Lancaster, they at last finished their labours, which were published in quarto, and at intervals. It is to be lamented that Sackville's diplomatic employments should have engrossed so much of his time as to have prevented him from completing this work himself; for the inequalities in the treatment of the subjects, which were unavoidably produced by the introduction of so many different hands, greatly reduce the importance and interest of the series, which, as it increased in bulk, became deteriorated in value.

The writers who flourished in the period immediately preceding the date of Spenser's publications sufficiently attest the propriety of our general assertion, that the age was favourable to the cultivation of English poetry. Gascoigne, who translated the Phœnissæ of Euripides, was a poet who excelled in the smoothness of his versification, and the elegance of his diction. A very curious poem, too, was produced at this time by Thomas Tusser, whose life presents a strange illustration of the vicissitudes that so frequently attend the career of genius. It was called "A Hundreth good Pointes of Husbandrie," and was originally produced in 1557, but was soon afterwards enarged and reprinted under the title of "Five Hundreth Pointes of good Husbandrie." This antique English Georgic is a plain didactic composition, in which the author, with singular simplicity of manner, lays down a variety of rules for agriculture, all of them, no doubt, very correct and useful, but unrelieved by any of those rustic pictures or images which the subject must have suggested to a more fertile imagination. As a picture, however, of the domestic economy, customs, and rural arts of our ancestors, the work is well deserving of more consideration than our anthologies of English poetry

have bestowed upon it. Another poet of this period, William Forrest, chaplain to queen Mary, produced a panegyrical history, in the octo-syllabic measure, of the life of queen Catherine, the consort of Henry VIII., in which that virtuous lady is compared to the patient Griselda, celebrated by Petrarch and Chaucer; and the king is zealously reproved for his cruelty to her. This poem is preserved amongst Anthony Wood's MSS. in the Bodleian libary at Oxford, having been purchased by the university after the death of Wood. In the British Museum there are two poems by Forrest, one of which is written in two splendid folio volumes on vellum, and entitled "The tragedious Troubles of the most chast and innocent Joseph, Son to the holy Patriarch Jacob." Forrest cultivated music very sedulously, and made a choice collection of the works of the most eminent contemporaneous composers.[1] There were also published at this time a scandalous but biting satire, entitled "The School House of Women;" which was answered by another, called "The Defence of Women;" a set of Christmas carols, printed by Wynkyn de Worde; and a great variety of psalms and metrical versions from different parts of the Scriptures. Connected with this period also was the revival by queen Mary of the absurd ceremony of the Boy-bishop, which had been formally abrogated by Henry VIII. fourteen years before, and which gave occasion to some of those thea trical mockeries which elicited the skill of a minor class of poets. The origin of this religious buffoonery, which is supposed to be founded on barbarous modes of life, may be traced back to the latter part of the ninth century.[2] On the occasion of the Constantinopolitan synod, it was the custom to deck some layman in the

[1] Amongst these were John Taverner, of Boston, organist of Cardinal College, now Christ Church (Oxford); John Merbeek, who first digested our present church service from the notes of the Roman missal; Fairfax, Tye, Sheppard, Norman, and others. This collection having fallen into the hands of William Hether, founder of the musical praxis and professorship at Oxford in 1623, are now preserved in the archives of the music school there. See Warton, *passim*. Some psalms in English verse by Forrest are preserved in the conventual library of Westminster. — *Park*.
[2] Warton, Strutt.

a disagreement with his tutor, as we are led to conjecture from a part of the correspondence of his friend Harvey, or from other circumstances which have not transpired, cannot now be determined. But whatever unpleasantness may have produced his resolution of abandoning the objects of collegiate ambition, he always looked back upon Alma Mater with affection, and the satisfaction of feeling, that, amongst the associates of his studies, he at least made one valuable friend. This was Gabriel Harvey, who was afterwards a fellow of Trinity Hall, in Cambridge, and who subsequently took out a degree in the faculty of civil law. Dr. Harvey's poetical pieces were much esteemed, but he must be regarded as a Latin rather than an English poet [1]; and his critical opinion in literature was held in the highest regard by sir Philip Sydney and Mr. Dyer. He was probably the first person who introduced hexameters into English poety ; a circumstance of which he appeared to be so proud, that, with a needless pomp of expression, he did not scruple to announce it to the world. [2] Like Spenser, he was a person of mean parentage, but of considerable alliances ; his father being a rope-maker, and himself a relation of sir Thomas Smith, the statesman. [3] The intimacy which grew up in college between Spenser and Harvey continued uninterruptedly to the close of the life of the former, who was survived by his friend. Their correspondence assists

[1] Mr Upton declares that a copy of English verses written by Dr Harvey, and prefixed to the "Faery Queen," with the signature of Hobbinol, were sufficient, if he had written nothing else, to render his name immortal. Warton appeared to be of the same opinion, pronouncing them to bespeak an elegant and well-turned mind. Mr Upton certainly over-rated the lines; but the versification is so agreeable, and there is so much ease, grace, and refinement in the little poem, that it is to be regretted Dr. Harvey did not produce more pieces of that sort, to enable us to judge more conclusively of his abilities. Amongst his works there are several compositions that exhibit profound research.

[2] For this, amongst other matters, Harvey fell under the displeasure of the noted Thomas Nash, one of the witless buffoons of the day. Nash's ridicule was directed against Harvey chiefly on account of his having turned his attention to astrology, for which he designates him and his brother, who fell into his opinions, as False Prophets, Weather-Wizards, Fortune-Tellers, Mountebanks, &c —*Bio. Brit.*

[3] A full account of Harvey may be seen in Wood's Fasti Oxon. A list of his writings is printed in Tanner's Bibliotheca Brit. Hib.

biography to many conjectures as to their lives and pursuits.

After his retirement from the university, Spenser resided for some time amongst his friends in the north of England, probably in the capacity of a tutor[1]. During the period he remained there he cultivated poetry with great ardour, and composed, beside the visions already adverted to, the "Legends and Court of Cupid," as well as a translation of Moschus's Idyllion of wandering Love. It is also said that he wrote a discourse called "The English Poet," which he intented to publish, but which was never printed[2]; and also that he designed a book to be called "Epithalamion Thamesis," which latter, as well as the Legends and Court of Cupid, appear to have been connected with circumstances subsequently woven into the "Faëry Queen." By the advice of his friend Harvey, he removed to London; but not until an event had occurred to render his residence in the country painful to him, — an event, however, to which we are indebted for one of his most pathetic poems.

A poet so earnest and devotional in his worship of the Pure and Beautiful, must have been susceptible in an extraordinary degree of tender impressions, and it was natural that he should have conceived an early passion in his first emancipation from the business of scholastic routine. Nor can we be much surprised to find that a passion thus generated in the retirement of the country, nurtured by solitude, and heightened by a fancy so copious and creative, should have been misplaced and delusive. It is very probable that Spenser invested his mistress, who was in reality a rustic coquette[3], with ideal qualities, and relying upon his own image of her truth, rendered a chivalric and trustful homage to the idol of his own imagination. But there is no doubt that the lady, after she had succeeded in enslaving his feelings, betrayed him, and bestowed her unworthiness upon

[1] Todd.

[2] E. K. [Kerke], a commentator on the "Shepheard's Calender"

[3] He calls her in the eclogue April, in the "Shepheard's Calender," the widow's daughter of the g'en, i. e. hamlet or borough. See glossary by E. K.

some obscure rival.[1] Whether Spenser was more deceived by his own confiding nature, or the falsehood of the lady, must remain a matter of conjecture; but he had a right to complain in his poetical character at all events, and he accordingly sought consolation in the muse for the deep affliction which this disappointment appears to have brought upon him. These circumstances produced his pastoral poem entitled "The Shepheard's Calender," in which in a series of eclogues he immortalised his griefs, assuming the name of Colin himself, and giving to his mistress that of Rosalinde.[2] This poem was published by Spenser shortly after he came to London, and dedicated to sir Philip Sydney, to whom he was introduced by Harvey. This was the first step of his progress in life. Sir Philip frequently invited him to his seat at Penshurst, in Kent, where he continued to cultivate poetry, and the Platonic philosophy; he afterwards introduced him to his uncle, the earl of Leicester, and subsequently to queen Elizabeth, who appointed him her poet laureat.[3]

[1] Satirised by Spenser under the name of Menalcas in his sixth eclogue.

[2] The adoption of this name has given occasion to much speculation amongst the biographers of Spenser The name of the lady's family has never transpired, and, with the exception of his friends Mr Harvey and Mr Kerke (who was the author of those annotations in the "Shepheard's Calender," and other works of Spenser's that bear the signature of E K.), the poet did not take any person into his confidence on the subject. But in one of his notes on the Calender, Mr. Kerke appears to have betrayed the secret, or at least to have furnished a clue to its discovery He observes that Rosalinde is a feigned name, which, if *well ordered*, will betray the true name of the poet's mistress. Mr Upton remarks that the meaning of *well ordered*, as he believes, is the replacing the letters in their proper order, by unlocking the anagram of which, agreeably to the practice of the day, he presumed the name of Rosalinde to be fabricated. The employment of anagrams was very common in Spenser's time, and was adopted by himself in several instances, such as where he makes Algrind out of Grindal, Merel out of Elmer, and Hobbinol out of Gabriel Harvey, the least intelligible certainly of them all. Assuming his conjecture to be correct, Mr. Upton continues that, "as *Rose* is a common christian name, so in Kent, among the gentry under Henry VI, in Fuller's Worthies, we find in Canterbury the name of John *Lynde*," leaving it to be inferred that the lady's real name was Rose Lynde, and that Spenser, instead of converting it into an anagram, ran it into a single word We possess no means of arriving at any more satisfactory conclusion on the subject; but we suspect that, if Spenser was desirous of concealing the lady's name, he never would have made it so apparent to those who must have known or suspected his attachment. At all events, Mr. Upton's ingenious theory of the anagram is inapplicable—which we are surprised he did not see—since the feigned name, if Mr. Upton's conjecture be correct, is not constructed upon the principles of an anagram, but is in fact the real and proper name of the perfidious beauty.

[3] This appointment did not officially take place until February, 1590, when it was bestowed on Spenser with a pension of fifty pounds a year, which

The publication of the "Shepheard's Calender" did not procure Spenser much credit at first, although it finally went through five editions during his lifetime. It was published without his name, and John Dove, who translated it into Latin verse[1], was not only ignorant of the author's name, but in his preface speaks of the work as being almost buried in obscurity. Sir Philip Sydney, acknowledging the excellence of the just satires upon mankind which it contained, was of opinion that the adoption of a rustic style throughout was unfavourable to the development of poetical beauty. Yet Webbe in his Discourse of English Poetry, and Francis Meres in his Wit's Treasury, bestowed unqualified praise upon it; and Abraham Fraunce, a barrister, and the friend of Sir Philip Sydney, thought it worthy of furnishing him with a series of examples to illustrate a work entitled "The Lawier's Logike."

The appointment of poet laureat did not bring much profit to Spenser for some time, in consequence of the opposition of the lord treasurer Burleigh to the payment of the annual stipend affixed to the office. This conduct on the part of his lordship was never forgiven by Spenser. He plainly alludes to it in many parts of his great poem, as well as in his Mother Hubbard's Tale, and his Ruins of Time, and did not cease to persecute the minister in satirical verses even after a more prosperous fortune had long placed him beyond his influence.[2] The friendship, however, of

he enjoyed until his death, and the grant of which was discovered some years ago in the Chapel of the Rolls. Previously to that time there was no poet laureat, nor was the title expressly applied either to him or his two immediate successors. *Malone — Life of Dryden.*

[1] The MS of this translation is still preserved in the library of Caius College, Cambridge — *Todd.*

[2] A story, which originated in Fuller's Worthies of England, was current in some of the early biographers of Spenser, respecting lord Burleigh, the truth of which has been of late years disproved. But, for the sake of an epigram, which it attributes to the poet, it is, perhaps, worth preserving. Her majesty, it appears upon the presentation of some poems to her by Spenser, ordered him a gratuity of 100*l*. Lord Burleigh objected, exclaiming, "What! all this for a song?" The queen replied, "Then give him what is reason." Some time elapsed, however, and Spenser, being still disappointed in the receipt of her majesty's bounty, took occasion to

sir Philip Sydney atoned to him for the mortifications he endured from the minister. Some allusions in the correspondence of Spencer at this period would lead us to suppose that he procured an appointment as agent to the earl of Leicester in France and other countries; but they are dark and fugitive; and the fact that he resided in London a very few months afterwards being established beyond doubt, sufficiently proves that, if such an appointment was ever contemplated, it was never carried into effect. On the contrary, we have abundant reason for believing that at this time he fell under the displeasure of the earl of Leicester, in consequence, as it is conjectured[2], of an officious desire he exhibited to see his lordship married to the queen. The offence, whatever it might have been, was heartily repented by Spenser, who, as a mark of his contrition, and to show that he erred in the excess of honest intentions, made a hasty translation of Virgil's Harmless Gnat, which he transmitted to his lordship, accompanied by a sonnet in which he humbly expressed his regret for what had occurred. The earl was not slow in accepting the poet's apology, and certainly forgave him before the Faëry Queen was written, of which poem it is believed his lordship was the hero under the name of prince Arthur. His restoration to the favour of Leicester was productive of immediate beneficial results; for in July, 1580, when Arthur, lord Grey of Wilton, was appointed lord-lieutenant of Ireland[2], Spenser was elevated to the office of secretary to the Irish viceroy on the recommendation, it is said, of his noble patron.[3]

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present a petition to her majesty, which was framed in the following form: —

"I was promised on a time
To have reason for my rhyme:
From that time, unto this season,
I received nor rhyme nor reason."

[1] Upton.

[2] The instructions given to lord Grey upon the occasion of this appointment — a document of the highest importance to political history, but which is beside the purpose of this memoir — is preserved in the manuscript library at Lambeth palace. — No. 600. p. 236.

[3] This supposition is founded on the fact that sir Henry Sydney, who had acted as lord deputy in Ireland for eleven years, wrote to lord Grey on the

Unfortunately the dissensions that convulsed Ireland, and the malicious reports that were generated by them, induced the queen, after a space of two years, to recall his lordship from the government of that country, and he returned to England in 1682 accompanied by Spenser. It had been represented to her majesty that lord Grey had exercised extreme severity towards the rebels; and fearful of the consequences of such a line of conduct, she thought it advisable to withdraw him from the administration and to grant a general pardon to the disaffected. This charge of cruelty is denied by Spenser, who vindicated his lordship's government in a tract entitled "A View of the State of Ireland," written subsequently in the year 1596. Perhaps there is not one of Spenser's works that has been subjected to so much animadversion as this treatise, and certainly none that has received so large a measure of rash praise and blind condemnation. Almost every work of magnitude that has been written upon the history and affairs of Ireland from that day to the present contains some allusion to this publication. When we take into consideration the period at which it was composed[1], and

occasion of his promotion, with a view to assist him in his administration by the benefit of his experience, which letter is preserved in the Sydney papers published by Collins Lord Grey was allied to sir Henry, who was married to the sister of the earl of Leicester; and it may, therefore, be reasonably supposed that the latter nobleman was concerned in the appointment of Spenser.

[1] Spenser's View of the State of Ireland was not the only work that was written at that time upon the subject, but appears rather to have been suggested by the representations that were then made about the social and political condition of that country, and the numerous theories of regeneration that were put forward — Ireland being then, as it has been ever since, a very perplexing question. Warton mentions that there is a curious collection of MSS., formerly belonging to the lord chancellor Egerton, but now in the possession of the marquis of Stafford, relating to such matters. One of these is called "A Briefe Declaration of the Gouerment of Irelande, opening many Corruptions in ye same; discouering ye discontentments of the Irishry, and the causes mouing theis expected troubles: And shewing meanes how to establish quietnes in that kingdome honorably, &c." The following are the titles of other MSS. in the same collection :— "Whether the quenes matie be to be counselled to governe Ireland after the Irish mãner as it hath bine accustomed, or to reduce it as neare as maye be to the englishe goũnemt" This, indeed, seems to have formed the grand problem for the solution of the English administration in Ireland. "Notes touching ye miserable Estate of ye Realme of Ireland by reason of Popish relgi n, and a briefe platforme for the reforming of it." &c. "A Demonstration how the warres of Ireland may be manteyned wth litle or no charge vnto her matie or the Realme of England."

the fact that it is the only work upon this subject which has been transmitted to us from so early an age, we shall be at no loss to discover why it has been so frequently referred to as an authority, even by those who generally object to the spirit in which it is written, and who refuse to acknowledge its intrinsic merits as a political commentary upon a topic at once new and embarrassing.

The View of the State of Ireland is written in the form of a dialogue between Eudoxus and Irenæus, which latter character is intended for Spenser himself. The style is clear and forcible; the facts gathered by the author, both as to the circumstances of the country at the time, and its history, antiquities, and customs, are extremely full and, as far as we possess any means of ascertaining, authentic. Some of the Irish commentators[1] object to Spenser that he deduced the origin of several Irish families from England and Wales, and that, while his work was to be prized for its political suggestions as to the means of reducing Ireland to obedience, it was not only exceedingly defective, but positively fallacious, upon the history and antiquities of the country, which they accuse him of having treated with the fancy and licence of a poet rather than the judgment and fidelity of an historian. This opinion may, possibly, have some foundation in truth; but it is not strengthened by any reliance that can be placed upon the veracity or erudition of those who pronounced it. Their own labours abundantly attest the absence of those qualities in which they assert Spenser to have been deficient; and as we find them in their attempts to trace the early annals of Ireland substituting fable for fact, and speculation for research, giving to the wildest legends the place and dignity of authenticated narratives, we may, without much hesitation, reject their criticisms altogether.

[1] Keating, Walsh, O'Flaherty. The Rev. Edward Ledwich, however, who wrote the "Antiquities of Ireland," declared that the only remaining depository of the ancient Irish manners was Spenser's book. But his authority is not worth much.

It cannot be denied, however, that Spenser's tract is sullied by prejudices that were unworthy of him: but it ought to be remembered that he wrote it in the midst of excitements; that the relative circumstances of the two countries, the one undergoing a total transition in her institutions, and the other fulfilling an invidious mission of conquest and forcible intermixture, were eminently unfavourable to the formation of an impartial estimate of facts; that Spenser's acquaintance with Ireland was local and limited; that his knowledge of her condition was acquired through a medium which could not always be relied upon; that he wrote for the information and satisfaction of the English court, to which his work was presented immediately after it was printed; and, above all, that he was an Englishman judging of a conquered and less civilised country, into which, at all hazards, he desired to see infused those principles of government which he believed were calculated to redeem it from civil discords and barbarism. When all these circumstances are taken into consideration, we shall find some grounds for surprise, not that his work is so partial, but that it is not still more so.

That the work is not thoroughly impartial must be admitted: but where is there to be found an impartial work upon the subject? It would seem to be almost impossible to analyse the affairs of Ireland without offending the prejudices, or disturbing the convictions of some of the parties into which she was then, and still continues to be divided. The greatest fault to be found with Spenser is, that he did not appreciate in a large spirit of philosophy the position occupied by the English, and the impediments that obstructed the progress of the Irish in civilisation. Entrenched in a confined circle called the Pale, the English might be said to have held a fortress in the island from which they fired upon the population around them. Finding that they could not subjugate or reclaim the restless people on whose soil they had planted their banners by the force of moral superiority, to which, to say the truth,

they did not give a fair or sufficient trial, they adopted the other alternative of physical superiority. No people can be expected to receive knowledge by compulsion at the point of the sword; and still less a race so mercural, so fierce, so reckless as the ancient Irish. When Spenser, therefore, described the difficulty of civilising them, he ought to have taken more pains to ascertain whether the means that had been employed for that purpose were adequate, wise, and just: and when he exposed their intractability, their feuds, and their crimes, he ought to have endeavoured to show how much of the manifold evils of the country were fairly attributable to the system of goverment that was adopted towards them. This is the full measure of all the objections that may be truly brought against him; not that he did not in part perceive that there were great faults on the side of the English administration, but that he did not sufficiently investigate the sources of the disease whose diagnoses he examined with extraordinary diligence. Some of the pictures he has drawn of the state of Ireland are so truthful, and indeed so applicable to the present condition of that country, that we cannot dismiss the subject without placing one or two extracts from the work before the reader. The opening of the dialogue unfolds the general design of the whole: —

"*Eudox.* But if that countrey of Ireland, whence you lately came, be of so goodly and commodious a soyle as you report, I wonder that no course is taken for the turning thereof to good uses, and reducing that nation to better government and civility.

"*Iren.* Marry, so there have bin divers good plottes devised, and wise councels cast already about reformation of that realme; but they say, it is the fatall destiny of that land, that no purposes whatsoever which are meant for her good, wil prosper, or take good effect, which, whether it proceed from the very genius of the soyle, or influence of the starres, or that Almighty God hath not yet appointed the time of her reformation, or that hee reserveth her in this unquiet state still for some secret scourge, which shall by her come unto England, it is hard to be knowne, but yet much to be feared.

"*Eudox.* Surely I suppose this but a vaine conceit of simple men, which judge things by their effects, and not by their causes; for I would rather thinke the cause of this evill, which hangeth upon that countrey, to proceed rather of the unsoundnes of the councels, and plots, which you say have bin oftentimes laid for the reformation, or of faintnes in following and effecting the same, than of any such fatall course appointed of God, as you misdeem; but it is the manner of men, that when they are fallen into any absurdity, or their actions succeed not as they would, they are always readie to impute the blame thereof unto the heavens, so to excuse their owne follies and imperfections. So have I heard it often wished also (even of some whose great wisedoms in opinion should seeme to judge more soundly of so weighty a consideration) that all that land were a sea-poole; which kind of speech is the manner rather of desperate men farre driven to wish the utter ruine of that which they cannot redress, than of grave councellers, which ought to think nothing so hard, but that thorough wisedome, it may be mastered and subdued, since the poet saith, that the 'wise man shall rule even over the starres;" much more over the earth; for were it not the part of a desperate phisitian to wish his diseased patient dead, rather than to apply the best indeavour of his skill for his recovery. But since we are so farre entered, let us, I pray you, a little devise of these evils, by which that country is held in this wretched case, that it cannot (as you say) be recured. And if it be not painefull to you, tell us those things, during your late continuance there, you observed to be most offensive, and greatest impeachment to all good rule and government thereof."

Irenæus then enters into an explanation of the evils which afflict the country, and which he divides into three sorts;—the first in the laws, the second in the customs, and the third in religion. With respect to laws, he declares that the introduction of the English laws into Ireland was rendered exceedingly difficult by reason of the lawlessness of the people, who, being always trained up in wars amongst themselves, were almost wholly ignorant of the nature of law, except their own old traditional system, known by the name of the Brehon law, by which, for example, in the case of murder, the malefactor was permitted to compound for the offence by making a recompence to the child or widow of him who was slain. The Irish accepted the sovereignty of Henry

VIII.; but, according to Irenæus, they still continued to hold their former privileges and seignories inviolate.

"*Iren.* True it is that thereby they bound themselves to his lawes and obedience, and in case it had beene followed up upon them, as it should have beene, and a government thereupon[1] settled among them, agreeable thereunto, they should have been reduced to perpetuall civilitie, and contained in continuall duty. But what bootes it to break a colte, and to let him straight runne loose at randome? So were these people at first will handled, and wisely brought to acknowledge allegiance to the kings of England: but, being straight left unto themselves, and their owne inordinate life and manners, they eftsoones forgot what before they were taught, and so so soone as they were out of sight, by themselves shook off their bridles, and began to colte anew, more licentiously than before."

It would appear then, upon the testimony of Spenser, that the fault was not wholly in the Irish, but in the deficient paternity of the English government; which, instead of cultivating the affections, and encouraging the dawning civilisation of the conquered country, left it to itself, and suffered it to fall back into its former state of rudeness. The necessity which was thus created of repairing a palpable error in government, by measures of oppression, no doubt contributed largely to increase the evils of which Spenser complains. Indeed, he does not scruple to acknowledge that the course adopted towards Ireland was at least impolitic and injudicious.

"*Iren.* I was about to have told you my reason therein, but that your selfe drew me away with other questions, for I was shewing you by what meanes, and by what sort, the positive lawes were first brought in and established by the Norman conqueror; which were not by him devised nor applyed to the state of the realme then being, nor as yet might best be (as should by lawgivers be principally regarded), but were indeed the very lawes of his owne countrey of Normandie. The condition whereof, how farre it differeth from this of England, is apparent to every least judgement. But to transferre the same lawes for the governing of the realme of Ireland, was much more inconvenient and unmeete, for the found a better advantage of the time, than was in the planting of them in Ireland, and folowed the execution of them with

more severity, *and was also present in person to overlooke the magistrates*, and overawe these subjects with the terrour of his word, and countenance of his majesty. But not so in Ireland, for they were otherwise affected, and yet doe so remaine, so as the same lawes (me seemes) can ill fit with their disposition, or worke that reformation that is wished. For lawes ought to be fashioned unto the manners and conditions of the people, to whom they are meant, and not to be imposed upon them according to the simple rule of right, for then (as I said) instead of good they may work ill, and pervert iustice to extreame iniustice. For hee that transfers the lawes of the Lacedemonians to the people of Athens, should finde a great absurdity and incovenience. For the lawes of Lacedemon were devised by Lycurgus as most proper and best agreeing with that people, whom he knew to be inclined altogether to to warres, and, therefore, wholly trained them up, even from their cradles, in armes and military exercises; clean contrary to the institution of Solon, who, in his lawes to the Athenians, laboured by all means to temper their warlike courages with sweet delightes of learning and sciences; so that as much as the one excelled in armes, the other excelled in knowledge. The like regard and moderation ought to be had in tempering, and managing this stubborn nation of the Irish, to bring them from their delight of licentious barbarisme unto the love of goodness and civiltie."

Had the course here indicated by Spenser been adopted by the government, the Irish might have been speedily redeemed from those customs which cnly acquired a stronger grasp on their affections by the sufferings they endured for them. It is evident enough that Spenser saw this; but he was not sufficiently a free agent to enter at large upon that part of the subject. The passage we have marked in italics contains one of the arguments which seem to have made the deepest impression on his mind; and suggests some serious reflections upon the neglect which was exhibited towards the Irish in the delegation of their country to the hands of deputies who, uncontrolled by the presence of majesty, too frequently administered their offices corruptly. The conquest of England, by William of Normandy, was consolidated by the vigilance and ability of that monarch, in seeing the changes he had projected carried into effect; but in Ireland the change was left

to work its own results. The deputies sowed the whirlwind, and it was not wonderful that they reaped the storm.

During Spenser's brief residence in Ireland, he was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of sir Walter Raleigh, who, a poet himself, took great delight in his society. Spenser speaks very affectionately of his intercourse with sir Walter at this period, and, happily for himself, was soon afterwards enabled to renew it. In June, 1586, the queen, in consideration of his services, and especially in honour of his genius, gave him a grant of 3028 acres in the county of Cork, being a part of the forfeited lands of the earl of Desmond.[1] One of the conditions of this grant being an obligation to cultivate the ground[2], Spenser returned to Ireland in the year 1587. But shortly after he received this mark of the royal favour, he lost his first and most generous patron, sir Philip Sydney, who died in the October of the same year. This circumstance deeply affected the poet, and is touchingly bewailed by him in a pastoral elegy, entitled "Astrophel." Immediately after this melancholy event, he repaired to Ireland to take possession of the property which her majesty had bestowed upon him. It was called Kilcolman, and lay upon the borders of a fine lake, surrounded by mountains. The castle is now a ruin, but there are enough of evidences remaining to show that the situation was exceedingly picturesque, and well adapted to nurture the imagination. The river Mulla, which he often mentions in his poems, ran through his grounds; and the Mole mountains, to which he makes frequent allusions, particularly in the piece called "Colin Clouts come home again," where he describes himself keeping his flocks at the foot of that lofty range, were close to his residence. In this romantic seclusion he was again visited by sir Walter Raleigh; and here it was that the "Faëry Queen" was projected, and the first three books were executed. We have a

[1] The rent of this grant was 17*l*. 7*s*. 6*d* per annum. — *Cox's Ireland.*

[2] In consequence of which obligation, all persons who held under such patents were called Undertakers.

very curious account of the design of this great work, in a rare book, entitled "A Discourse of Civill Life; containing the Ethicke part of Morall Philosophie," which was written by Lodowick Bryskett, a friend of Spenser, and published in 1606.[1] The introduction to this book, addressed to lord Grey, of Wilton, describes a party assembled at the author's cottage in the neighbourhood of Dublin, consisting of "Dr. Long, primate of Ardmagh; sir Robert Dillon, knight; M. Dormer, the Queene's Sollicitor; captain Christopher Carleil; captain Thomas Norreis; captain Warham St. Leger; captain Nicholas Dawtrey; and *M. Edmond Spenser, late your lordship's secretary*; and Th. Smith, apothecary." This company of worthies having fallen into a general conversation on subjects connected with moral philosophy, Bryskett, addressing them, expresses a desire that Spenser, who, he says, "is not onely perfect in the Greek tongue, but also very well read in philosophie both morall and naturall," should expound to them in what consisted the great benefits which men obtain by moral philosophy, and "what the same is, what be the parts thereof, whereby vertues are distinguished from vices." This request being seconded by all those present, Spenser makes the following answer, in which he pleads as his excuse for declining to gratify their curiosity, that he had undertaken a work which would in some measure satisfy their inquiries:—

"Though it may seem hard," said Spenser, "for me to refuse the request made by you all, whom, every one alone, I should for many respects be willing to gratifie; yet as the case standeth, I doubt not but, with the consent of the most part of you, I shall be excused at this time of this taske which would be laid upon me For sure I am that it is not unknowne to you, that I have already undertaken a work tending to the same effect, which is in heroical verse, under the title of the FAËRY QUEEN, *to represent all the moral vertues; assigning to every vertue a knight, to be the patron and defender of the same; in whose actions and feates of armes and chivalry, the operations of that vertue whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed; and the vices*

[1] Malone. Todd.

and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same to be beaten down and overcome; which work, as I have already well entered into, if God shall please to spare me life that I may finish it according to my mind; your wish, M. Bryskett, will be in some sort accomplished, though perhaps not so effectually as you could desire. And the same may very well serve for an excuse, if at this time I crave to be forborne in this your request, since any discourse that I might make thus on the sudden in such a subject, would be but simple and little to your satisfactions. For it would require good advisement and premeditation for any man to undertake the declaration of these points that you have proposed, containing in effect the ethicke part of morall philosophie. Whereof, since I have taken in hand to discourse at large *in my poeme before spoken,* I hope the expectation of that work may serve to free me at this time from speaking in that matter, notwithstanding your motion and all your entreaties."

Spenser originally intended to divide his poem into twelve books, each book being specially dedicated to a separate moral virtue; but that intention never was accomplished, as we shall see as we advance a little further in his life. Prince Arthur, the hero of the poem, personifying the virtue of magnificence, was designed for the earl of Leicester, and each of the knights had his prototype in the court of queen Elizabeth. Whether Spenser had been drawn into the composition of the Faëry Queen by the advice of sir Walter Raleigh, or was merely encouraged in its prosecution by the approval of that distinguished man, we do not know: but when the first three books were completed, he committed them to the press, accompanying sir Walter back to London for that purpose. It was at the time of this visit he was introduced to the queen by his new patron, who worthily supplied the place of Sydney, and there it was that his appointment as poet laureat took place. This first portion of the poem was no sooner issued to the public than Spenser returned to Ireland, in 1590, to resume his pleasant task: but such was the fame which, contrary to the expectations of his friend Harvey, who appears to have under-rated the merits of the work, that followed the publication of the

Faëry Queen, that, in the following year, the bookseller for whom the work had been printed, collected together all the fragments of Spenser's poetry which he could find scattered abroad in MS., and published them under the general title of "Complaints, containing sundry small Poemes of the World's Vanitie." These small poems were severally dedicated to various persons of quality, and amongst the rest to some of the high-born members of the poet's family. Their titles were, 1. The Ruins of Time: 2. The Teares of the Muses: 3. Virgil's Gnat: 4. Prosopopoia; or, Mother Hubbard's Tale: 5. The Ruines of Rome, by Bellay: 6. Muiopotmos; or, the Tale of the Butterflies: 7. Visions of the Word's Vanitie: 8. Bellaye's Visions: 9. Petrarche's Visions. With the single exception of Muiopotmos, which had appeared separately before, all the poems in this collection were given to the world for the first time, although they had been circulated very largely in private.[1]

In the following year, 1591, Spenser returned to London to superintend the publication of a new poem, which he had written in the interval, called Daphacioda. This was an elegy upon the death of Douglas Howard, daughter and heiress of Henry, lord Howard, viscount Byndon; and wife of sir Arthur Gorges, of whom Spenser speaks as of a person "known to the Muses."[2]

[1] Mr. Todd, in his Life of Spenser, has bestowed great pains upon his account of these poems; but his labours have not led to any results of consequence. The main features which he has illustrated are the dedications, giving a genealogical review of the persons to whom they were addressed, which impedes the course, without improving the interest of the narrative. Indeed, the great fault of Mr. Todd's Life of Spenser, which is highly meritorious for the industry and accumulation of small facts which it displays, and for its frequent corrections of the errors of previous writers, is, that it overloads the view of the poet's life and character with a mass of details and episodes, in which we constantly lose sight of the main object to which the sympathies of the reader are directed.

[2] In speaking of sir Arthur Gorges, Mr. Todd observes that he had "hitherto been recorded as a man of genius, without a proof of the assertion." But, independently of the MS. poems written by him, which were preserved in the Bridgewater Collection, of the existence of which Mr. Todd was aware, sir Arthur was the author of a metrical version of Lucian, which Mr. Todd had either forgotten or was not acquainted with.

A blank of a few years now follows in the life of Spenser, which is supposed to have been spent in Ireland, where he could probably cultivate his success under more auspicious circumstances. In 1595 we find that he returned to England with another work ready for the press, called "Colin Clouts come Home again." This is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable of Spenser's minor poems; and it may be a useful guide to a proper appreciation of its merits to withdraw the mask which, under fictitious names, conceals the real persons to whom Spenser assigned his characters. This species of writing, which had its origin in the allegorical style of the Italians, was very popular amongst the poets of the age of Elizabeth, and was employed upon all available occasions by Spenser. It appears also to have been resorted to, very frequently, by subsequent poets even down to the reign of George I., but to have since fallen gradually into desuetude. In the poem of "Colin Clouts," there are a number of persons introduced under fictitious names, which the researches of previous biographers enable us to explain. *The Shepherd of the Ocean* is intended for sir Walter Raleigh; *Astrophel,* for sir Philip Sydney, under which name he is deplored in the elegy written by Spenser on his death; *Amyntus,* for the Earl of Derby; *Alcyon,* for sir Arthur Gorges; *Harpalus,* for Barnaby Googe, *probably,* who was first a retainer to Cecil, and afterwards a gentleman pensioner to the queen[1]; *Corydon,* or Fraunce, the barrister, *perhaps; Palin,* also doubtful, for Chaloner, a pastoral poet, whom Puttenham ranks with Spenser; *Alcon,* assigned by Todd to Thomas Watson, a sonnetteer, who, in the extravagant vein of the day, was called the English Petrarch; *Old Palemon,* for Thomas Chuchyard, a prolific writer of poetical pieces; and *Aetion* was intended for Michael Drayton. In addition to these there are two persons who figure in the poem in their real names, Alabaster

1. Brydge's edition of Phillips's Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum. See Todd.

and Daniel. The former was a profound Grecian [1], and a man of great acquirements; and Daniel, a writer whose contributions to our elder poetry are well known and highly valued. The ladies celebrated in this piece are the queen, under the appellation of *Cynthia*; the countess of Warwick as *Theana*; the countess of Cumberland, as *Marian*; the marchioness of Northampton as *Maasilia*; and the beautiful lady Rich as *Stella*, the name given to her by sir Philip Sydney, which afterwards became celebrated by Swift, who applied it to Mrs. Johnson. Two other names, *Flavia* and *Candida*, are also introduced, but the individuals they were meant to imply are not known. This poem bears on its dedication the date of December, 1791, which has been satisfactorily proved to be an error. [2]

A pastoral elegy to the memory of sir Philip Sydney, called Astrophel, was also published in this year; and it is conjectured that about the same time appeared the Amoretti or Sonnets, which are entitled to more attention on account of their being connected with one of the most interesting events in the life of the poet, than their perusal will reward. Like the Sonnets of Shakspeare they reveal glimpses of the poet's life; but, unlike these masterpieces of poetical skill, they are for the greater part fantastical and affected. They contain a number of allusions to a second attachment which Spenser had formed in Ireland, and which drew from him this poetical expression of feelings that may be presumed to have slept during the interval that had elapsed since his intercourse with the faithless Rosalinde. If their description of the lady may be taken for granted, she was extremely beautiful, and, in course of time, not less kind and compassionate. The early sonnets are filled with little more than declarations of love, and tributes to the dazzling charms of the enslaver; but, as we proceed, we discover that he has at last made an impression upon her heart, which gradually increases

[1] Wood.— Athen. Ox. Fasti.
[2] Life prefixed to Church's edition of Spenser's Faery Queen. Biograph. Brit. art. Spenser. Todd, vol. i. p. lxxxix.

until the passion becomes mutual. In the fifty-ninth sonnet he praises his mistress for the steadiness and propriety of her conduct, and congratulates himself upon his good fortune in having fixed his affections upon her. The next sonnet informs us that he was then forty years of age, and that one year had passed since he fell in love, concluding with the expression of a hope that the ensuing year would crown his hopes, or terminate his life. The sixty-second developes his expectations still more strongly; and the sixty-fourth discovers that the lady had yielded up her scruples, and suffered herself to be so far persuaded as to indulge the poet with "a kiss," which he sings with as much ecstasy as the limits of the stanza will permit. As the sonnets proceed the amatory feelings rise to the full height; and, with the exception of some trifling differences that arose to interrupt the "course of true love," gratitude on the one side, and happiness on both, occupy the collection to the close. An epithalamium accompanying the whole, signifies that the poet was finally rewarded for his devotion by the hand of the lady.

The sonnet is supposed to have originated amongst the Provençals; a conjecture that is greatly strengthened by the affinity of the word to the French *sonner*, to sound, or ring, and the words *sonnette*, a little bell, and *sonnettier*, a maker of little bells, which are first met with in that language. The sonnet was introduced into the Italian by Guittone d'Arezzo, about the middle of the thirteenth century, and into English by the unfortunate Earl of Surrey, some thirty years before. With respect to its construction, many theories have been put forward; but common consent, and the usage of the most distinguished poets who excelled in that description of verse, have decided its constitution and fixed its limits. It ought to consist of fourteen lines [1], divided by the sense, as well as the rhyme, into two

[1] Mr. Capel Lofft, who certainly cannot be referred to as a critical authority, detected a curious analogy between the ancient lyre, when augmented to fourteen strings, and the lines which compose the sonnet. This fanciful theory will be found fully stated in that gentleman's cumbrous preface to his "Anthology."

quatrains and two tercets. In some instances, the sonnet has been composed of three detached elegiac stanzas, concluded by an isolated couplet; but it does not require much reflection upon the nature of the poem to enable us to perceive that this form is spurious and inconsistent with the main design, which will not suffer either the matter or the verse to be thus broken up into parts. Various writers have adopted various modifications of the legitimate plan, and departed from it at will, as their own caprice or the necessities of the rhyme happened to suggest: but, although the arbitrary divisions that have been laid down, by which it is prescribed that the subject shall be stated in the first, and illustrated in the second quatrain, confirmed by the first tercet, and concluded in the last[1], cannot be strictly maintained on all occasions without risking the intrinsic beauty of the verse, and are not essentially necessary to its completeness, yet any innovation that has the effect of impairing the unity of the poem must utterly deprive it of that singleness, closeness, and interwoven expression which are its grand characteristics. The sonnet is properly dedicated to a single thought which it developes as it were, in a burst of music. Some poets have filled the measure with a series of images, others with a succession of arguments; and some have ventured so far as to attempt in the bounded confines the delineation of a picture consisting of numerous objects. All experiments of that kind are open to such obvious objections that their exhibition carries with it a sufficient exposure of their defects. It has been urged by some competent critics, and amongst the rest by Dr. Johnson, that the sonnet is unsuited to the genius of the English language, on account of the quadruplication of rhyme which it demands, and which our language, unlike that of Italy, cannot supply without awkwardness and distortion. That there is a certain portion of truth in this remark cannot be wholly denied; but the best answer to the objection is contained in the fact that the difficulties

[1] Edinburgh Review, vol. vi. No. 12.

pointed out have been in many instances triumphantly overcome: by Spenser in his Faëry Queen, which in the measured varieties of its stanza, exhibits a remarkable resemblance to the sonnet; by Milton in his Lycidas, which abounds in complicated and repeated terminations; by Drayton in his Polyolbion, and Butler in his Hudibras, both of which poems establish in an extraordinary degree that very flexibility, and those very facilities in the language, which Dr. Johnson denies. But it must be granted that our English poets have generally failed in this peculiar description of composition; an admission, however, that does not compromise the capability of their materials. With the exception of Shakspeare and Wordsworth, it cannot be said that we possess any poets who have achieved success in this rigid and exacting measure. Spenser signally failed. In the mere construction of the stanza, he departed from the pure Italian model, and uniformly closes with a couplet: but this deviation might be readily excused if the spirit of the poem was preserved with fidelity. We look, however, in vain, for simplicity and compactness of thought. A diversity of conceits are crowded into the verse, which presents a perplexity of fanciful and forced expletives that are abhorrent to the genius of the sonnet. The love he describes, too, is premeditated, mechanical, Petrarcan, and almost Platonic. It wants the inward devotion, the irrepressible earnestness, the freshness and bounding eloquence of true passion. Sometimes, as if he longed to free himself from his trammels, he gives way to extravagant flights of imagination; and, at other times, struggling to restrain himself within them, he sinks into dulness and cold monotony. But this very inability to conform to the laws of the sonnet formed an essential part of his poetical character, and threw him, fortunately for his fame, into other channels where his inexhaustible invention and gorgeous imagination had a wider and more congenial field.

From the internal evidence of the sonnet, it may be

assumed that Spenser was married in 1594; that the lady's name was Elizabeth; that the marriage was celebrated at Cork, near which his castle of Kilcolman was situated; and that the bride was the daughter of a merchant of that city. The whole of this statement, however, rests upon conjecture. Some of his biographers are of opinion that he had been married before; but the absence of all allusion to such a circumstance in his works, and his declaration (which was but a poetical fiction after all), in the poem of "Colin Clouts," that he was still suffering from Rosalinde's cruelty, refutes the supposition.

In the year 1596 he again appeared before the public. Four hymns on "Love and Beauty," which he had written in "the greener times of his youth," as a warning to thoughtless lovers, and the "Prothalamion," a spousal tribute, in honour of the double marriages of the ladies Elizabeth and Catherine Somerset to H. Gilford and W. Peter, esquires, were published in this year. He also published a second part of the "Faëry Queen," containing the fourth, fifth, and sixth books, and a new edition of the former part. Of the remaining six books, which would have concluded his original design, only two imperfect cantos of the "Mutabilitie" have been preserved, and these were first given to the world in the folio edition of 1609, as forming part of a lost book, entitled the "Legend of Constancy." Connected with this subject, a question of great interest arises, which has given occasion to a warm controversy amongst the biographers and critics of Spenser.

It appears that sir James Ware, in a preface to an edition of "Spenser's View of Ireland," which he printed in Dublin, in 1663, states that the poet *finished the latter part of the Faërie Queen* in Ireland, but that it was soon after lost by the disorder and abuse of his servant, whom he had sent before him into England. This assertion is unhesitatingly rejected by Dryden and Fenton upon the ground that Spenser's sorrow for the death of sir Philip Sydney was so great as to de-

prive him of the spirit to accomplish his design; and they, therefore, conclude that the whole story of the MSS. being lost on the voyage is disentitled to credit. In answer to this argument, which is at best a very shallow one, Dr. Birch contends that the death of sir Philip Sydney was not an event sufficient to prevent Spenser from finishing his poem; in proof of which he cites the fact that Spenser actually published six books of it after that event took place. He lays also some stress upon the authority of sir James Ware, who lived near the time, and was in a situation to inform himself accurately of the fact. The author of Spenser's life in the "Biographia Britannica" opposes Dr. Birch's opinion by reference to dates, showing that the three first books of the Faëry Queen were finished in 1590, and the next three in 1596; and that, as Spenser died in two years afterwards, it was not likely, judging by the time occupied in the composition of the former books, that the statement of sir James Ware was founded upon truth. Dr. Farmer adopts the same opinion, which he strengthens by a reference to the poems of William Browne, published in 1616, in which that author states that Spenser died

"Ere he had ended his melodious song."

To this testimony Mr Todd adds a quotation from sir Aston Cokain in 1658 (who could not be supposed to know much about the matter), to the effect that Spenser would have excelled Virgil had he lived so long

"As to have finished his faëry song."

But Mr. Todd, who throws in this scrap of evidence, apparently in ridicule of Dr. Farmer, produces the testimony of a writer anterior to Browne and Cokain in support, not of sir James Ware's assertion, that the remaining books of the Faëry Queen were lost in the passage to England, but of the fact that Spenser had completed them, and that they were destroyed in the

Irish rebellion of 1598. The writer quoted by Todd is sir John Stradling, the friend of Camden and Harrington, and the statement or allusion is found in a Latin epigram, which was published by him two years *before* those MSS. which had escaped the fury of the rebels were recovered and given to the public. It is not improbable, therefore, that a portion of the whole of the remaining six books might have been amongst the MSS. destroyed by the furious mob, although they might not have been completely finished, or in a state ready for the press: an opinion in which Mr. Chalmers, the last biographer of Spenser, entirely concurs.

The view of the state of Ireland was published in the same year 1596. It is presumed that this work was written at the command of the queen, with a view to reconcile the Irish to her government, and presented to her majesty, and the great officers of state by Spenser, in his official capacity: but it was not published until 1633; a circumstance that can be accounted for only on the supposition that it was not considered by the court to be of a healing tendency.[1] The specimens extracted by Mr. Todd from the MS. copies to which he had access, all of which differ in various passages, show that the queen decided wisely in withholding the work from publication, if her majesty's object was to conciliate the Irish.

Spenser, who seems to have expected some promotion in consequence of his labours as a politician, returned to Ireland in the following year, 1597.[2] Nor is it improbable that some honourable reward for his services was contemplated by the government; as by a letter, discovered by Mr. Malone, from queen Elizabeth to the Irish authorities, dated September 30. 1598, it

[1] Chalmers. A question naturally suggests itself here. If the queen commanded Spenser to write a work that should have a tendency to reconcile the Irish to her government, is it likely he would have written such a work as his "View of the State of Ireland?"—We think not. A writer who could undertake a task of that kind at command, must have been capable of sacrificing his own opinions in its execution, which Spenser cannot be charged with having done.

[2] Biographia Britannica.

appears that he was recommended to be sheriff of Cork. The rebellion of Tyrone, however, broke out in the following month; and Spenser and his family were compelled to fly from Kilcolman. In the confusion attendant upon their flight, they left one of their children behind: the rebels burst into the house, which they set on fire, and the infant was consumed in the conflagration. These accumulated misfortunes pressed severely upon Spenser, who arrived in England with a broken heart, and died in the January following, 1599, in the forty-sixth year of his age.

Respecting the circumstances of Spenser's death some diversity of opinion has prevailed; and on this point, as on others, slight allusions and incidental expressions have been interpreted into fuller meaning than, perhaps, they were originally intended to convey. It has been asserted that he died in extreme poverty, which is not probable, since he enjoyed an income of 50*l.* per annum from the queen, and had many friends amongst the aristocracy. It has also been stated that he died in King-street, Dublin, instead of King-street, Westminster, where he had taken up his quarters on his arrival with his family in an inn or lodging-house. His funeral expenses were defrayed by the earl of Essex, "a nobleman," observes Mr. Chalmers, "very erroneous in political life, but too much a friend of literature to have allowed Spenser to starve, and afterwards to insult his remains by a sumptuous funeral." His pall was held up by some of the first poets of the day: and his body was interred in Westminster Abbey, near that of Chaucer. A monument was erected to his memory by Anne, countess of Dorset, thirty years after his death. The present monument in the Abbey was erected or restored in 1778.

The family left by Spenser has been very imperfectly traced: of his wife and children we possess scarcely any information. Two sons, Sylvanus and Peregrine, are said to have survived him. The former married Ellen, the daughter of David Nangle, of the county of Cork, and had two sons, Edmund and William Spenser:

the latter also married, and had a son, Hugolin, who was replaced, at the time of the Restoration, in a part of the lands that belonged to the poet. He attached himself, however, to the cause of James II., and was ultimately outlawed for treason. A second son of Sylvanus, some time afterwards, became a suitor for the forfeited property, which he finally recovered through the intercession of Mr. Montagu, who was at the head of the treasury, and to whom he was introduced by Congreve the poet. This individual was the last of the family of whom there remains any record. Dr. Birch describes him to have been a man advanced in years when he saw him, but unable to furnish any recollections connected with his ancestors.

It is much to be lamented that the particulars of Spenser's life which have descended to us are so scanty, as to furnish us with very imperfect and unsatisfactory illustrations of his private character. If, however, we turn to his works for the only data from which we can venture to draw any inferences of that sort, we shall find abundant ground for believing that he was a man of sensitive, amiable, and pious dispositions. In this opinion, which is derived from a minute examination of his productions, all his biographers agree. It is fortified by the best moral evidence; for it is but reasonable to suppose that a man whose writings were uniformly directed to the exemplification and advocacy of the Christian virtues, must have been influenced by them in the conduct of life. His intimate connection with Sydney and Raleigh (the master spirits of their age); the firm friendship he maintained with other distinguished men to the close of his life; the integrity with which he discharged his public duties in Ireland, which procured for him a valuable and honourable reward from the queen; and the favour he found at court, which he never appears to have forfeited, even by any of those petty indiscretions that sometimes disfigure the record of flattered genius, confirm the convictions to which his poetry insensibly leads.

Of that poetry, it would be difficult to say any thing now, that has not been said before. It has been so thoroughly investigated by able and numerous commentators that there remains scarcely a single point which has escaped the scrutiny of criticism. His great work, the Faëry Queen, stands alone in the language: it has the singular distinction of having produced a vast number of imitators[1], without having established a school. The richness and variety of its images, its comprehensiveness of design, and fluency of expression, awakened the ambition of subsequent poets; but they struggled in vain to reach the height at which they strained. They caught merely the reflection of outlines, which they were unable to inform with the vital spirit. The Castle of Indolence, by Thomson, and the Minstrel, by Beattie, may be regarded, especially the former, as the most successful attempts in this way. But they stand at an immeasurable distance from their master.

The plan of the Faëry Queen has been pronounced by various writers to be faulty or perfect, agreeably to the various standards by which they tried it; and, although, perhaps, none of them have arrived at a judgment which can be considered conclusive in itself, yet they all contributed, more or less, by the ingenuity of their speculations, and the extent of their researches, to draw out, and explain its marvellous beauties. The professed object of the poem is to exhibit the twelve Moral Virtues personified in the achievements of twelve brave knights, a description of machinery which was entirely consistent with the chivalrous taste of the period. The Faëry Queen is supposed to hold a great feast, according to annual custom, which was to last for twelve days; during which, twelve separate complaints are brought under her consideration. The especial province of the queen is to redress the wrongs of the injured; and she accordingly commissions twelve knights to undertake the adventures necessary to that end. The

[1] See the list of imitations in Todd's Edition of Spenser, vol. i., to which nearly as many more names might be added.

achievements of each knight, in the fulfilment of his prescribed office, exemplifies a particular virtue, such as Holiness, Chastity, Temperance; and he has one book of the poem devoted to himself, of which he is the hero. But as this design would unavoidably break the poem into separate narratives, and so deprive it of that unity which is essential to the epic, it was necessary to create some superior power, or interest, which should link the whole together, and so lead ultimately to one grand conclusion. With this view, a principal knight, or general hero, Prince Arthur, is introduced, who represents the virtue of Magnificence, assumed to be the perfection of all the rest. In this character, the poet professes to exhibit "the image of a brave knight perfected in the twelve private moral virtues:" and in this character, in truth, the unity of the work is completed. The way in which Prince Arthur is connected with the action of the whole, and rendered inseparable from its progress, is appropriate and natural. He is supposed to have a vision of the Faërie Queen to fall in love with an unknown fair, Gloriana or Glory, to go in search of her, and at last to discover and win her. The victories of the twelve knights advance the catastrophe gradually to its accomplishment; and, as Arthur lends his assistance respectively to each, he shares in the triumph, and approaches still nearer and nearer to Glory, until at last he obtains complete possession.

If this design be examined by the principles of the classical epic, a manifest and pervading fault will be discovered in its construction. The part which Prince Arthur performs in the adventures of the knights is accessorial, and not predominant. He is a secondary agent, and not a leading hero; nor does his paramount interest in the fulfilment of the final end redeem him from the inferiority of his place in the progress of the main body of events. One of the critics on the Faëry Queen [1] vindicates the propriety of the plan, and, to prove its accordance with the models of antiquity,

[1] Mr. Upton

endeavours to show that it preserves the indispensable divisions of a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning, he observes, is the British Prince falling in love; the middle, his adventures in search of his mistress; the end, his obtaining her. But this injudicious attempt to reconcile the poem to laws which its conduct obviously violates, only developes the more clearly that it does not belong to the class to which the critic desires it to be assigned. The unity of the classical epic demands the representation of one action complete in itself: the Faëry Queen exhibits many actions which are separate and complete in themselves, although they lead to one object in common; and it is in this circumstance we discover the intrinsic character of the work, which, instead of presenting a unity of *action*, which form the basis of the classic, displays an unity of *design*, which is the peculiar province of the Gothic school.[1] This unity consists in the relation of the several adventures, says an excellent critic, to one common *original* (or *origin*) and one common *end*. But the poem, while it takes advantage of this description of license, within the bounds of which it is strictly confined, is also indebted to classical examples for some of the expedients employed in its composition. The most remarkable of these is the adoption of one character, more important than all the rest, from whom all the events spring, and in whom the grand interest of the whole is concentrated. If Prince Arthur does not act the hero throughout, he is notwithstanding always present, in the influence which he exerciess over the scene. Another feature, derived from the same source, is the introduction of episodes, which the adventures of the twelve knights may in some sort be considered to be.[2]

There is no doubt that Spenser adopted Ariosto as

[1] Dr. Hurd's observations on this distinction are remarkably lucid and ingenious.

[2] This view, which differs widely from that of Dr. Hurd, removes some of the objections that have been been hitherto brought against the poem.

his model, and that he drew largely from the old romances and tales of chivalry. To the ancient romance of "La Morte d'Arthur," the "Book of Sir Tristam," and several others [1], may be traced the origin of many personages, as well as many of the adventures in the Faëry Queen. The spirit of the Provençal poetry, which descended to him from the Italians, and from Chaucer, breathes through the whole of that magnificent work. The allegorical style in which he indulges may also be referred to the same inspiration. But it was natural that Spenser should have fallen upon those devices which distinguished the age of chivalry, and which were so highly popular in his time. The picturesque features of that age, the noble courage, the lofty beauty, the self-devotion, the gorgeous costume, the banners and the blaze of heraldry, presented to him the fittest field for the exercise of an imagination which appeared to be inexhaustible. The stanza he adopted, whatever objections might lie against it on other grounds, was eminently suited to the flow of a rich fancy. It is true that it often compelled him to dilate his descriptions, to run into repetitions and redundancies, and to make out his measure at any cost of proportion, or sacrifice of thought: but, on the other hand, these very necessities were favourable to a genius which was so creative that it was ready at all times to fill its limits with fresh conceptions and splendid images. His very prolixity was only productive of increased beauties; and, even if they were sometimes superfluous and out of place, they were always original in invention, and exquisite in colouring. Time, however, has pronounced a verdict which critical discussion cannot shake; and the name of Edmund Spenser will maintain its supremacy at the head of our Romantic Poetry as long as the English language shall survive.

[1] The curious reader may be referred to Warton's remarks on Spenser's imitations, in which particular coincidences may be found industriously set forth.

APPENDIX.

OBLATIO TRIUM REGUM,

Or "The Offering of the Three Kings," which forms the thirteenth of the Towneley, the eighth and ninth of the Chester, and the eighteenth of the Coventry series, and which is also treated in the pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors in the Corporation of Coventry, will enable us to institute between these curious performances a comparison more satisfactory to the inquisitive reader than has hitherto been in our power. We have been at so much pains to ascertain, by collation, the true reading of the MSS., that we hope no error of moment will be discovered.

In the Towneley series, Herod, the first character introduced, opens the piece with imposing silence on the spectators, under pain of death :

> "Peasse I byd both far and nere ;
> I warne you leyss your sawes sere :
> Who that makes hoyse whyls I am here
> I say shall dy."

He then expatiates on his great power with evident complacency ; and ends with denouncing vengeance on all who do not worship him and Mahoune :

> Of alle this warld soothe far and nere
> The lord am I.
> Lord am I of every land,
> Of towre and towne, of se and sand,
> Agans me dar no man stand
> That berys lyfe ;
> Alle erthly thyng bowes to my hand,
> Both man and wyfe.
> Man and wyfe that warne I you
> That in this warld is lyfand now,

To Mahowne and me alle shalle bow,
Both old and ying;
On hym wylle I ich man trow,
For any thyng.
For any thyng it shalle be so,
Lord over alle where I go,
Who so says agane I shalle hym slo,
Where so he dwelle;
The feynd, if he were my fo,
I shuld hym felle.
To felle those fatures I am bowne,
And dystroy those doges in feyld and towne
That wille not trow on Sant Mahowne,
Oure God so swete;
Those fals faturs I shalle felle downe
Under my feete.
Under my feete I shalle thaym fare,
Those ladys that wille [not] lere my lare,
For I am myghty man ay whare,
Of ilk a pak;
Clenly shapen, hyde and hare,
Withoutten lak.
The myght of me may no man mene,
For alledos me any teyn,
I shalle dyng thaym downe bydeyn,
And wyrk thaym wo;
And on assay it shalle be seyn
Or I go.
And therfor wille I send and se
In alle this land, fulle hastely,
To looke if any dwelland be
In towre or towne
That wylle not hold holly on me,
And on Mahowne."[1]

All this is sufficiently braggart; but it dwindles into insignificance when compared with the same speech in the Chester series: here Herod is not merely the king of the whole earth, but a god.

"I welde this worlde withouten wene;
I beate all those unbuxom bene;
I drive the devills albydene
Deepe in hell adowne.

[1] Towneley Mysteries, drama 13.

"For I am kinge of all mankinde,
I byd, I beate, I lose, I bynde;
I master the moone: take this in mynde
That I ame most of mighte.

"I ame the greatest above degree
That is, or was, or ever shall be:
The sonne it dare not shine on me,
And I byd him goe down.

"No raine to fall shall now be free,
Now no lorde have that liberty
That dare abyde and I byd fleey,
But I shall crake his crowne." [1]

But even this boasting is much inferior to what we find in the pageant of *The Sheurmen and Tailors* of Coventry: here he claims absolute omnipotence:

"Qui statis in Jude et Rex Israel [2];
And the myghtyst conquerowre that ever walkid on grownd.
For I am evyn he thatt made botte hevin and hell;
And of my myghte powar holdith up this world rownd.
Magog and Madroke bothe, them did I confownde,
And with this bryght bronde there bonis I brak on sundur,
Thatt all the wyde worlde ow those rappis did wondur.
I am the cawse of this grett lyght and thundur:
Ytt ys through my fure that the' soche noyse dothe make.
My feyrefull contenance that so clowdis doth incumbur.
That oftymes for drede that of the verre yerth doth quake.
Loke when I with males this bryght bronde dott schake;
All the whole world from the north to the sowthe,
I them dystroie with won worde of my mowthe.
To reycownt unto you myn inneumerabull substance
Thatt were to moche for any tong to tell:
For all the whole orent ys under myn obbeydeance,
And prynce am I of purgatorre and cheff capten of hell.
And those tyraneos trayturs be force ma I compell
Myne enemyis to vanquese, at evyn to dust them dryve,
And with a twynke of myn iee not won to be lafte alyve.
Beheld my contenance and my colur!
Bryghtur then the sun in the middis of the dey!
Where can you have a more grettur succur,

[1] Chester MS., drama 9.
[2] Sic in Sharp. We have made one or two conjectural emendations in this extract.

Then to behold my person that ys soo gaye,
My fawcon [1] and my fassion with my gorgis araye?
He thatt had the grace allway on me to thynke,
Lyve the' myght allway withowt othur meyte or drynke.
And thys my tryomfande fame most hylist dothe abownde,
Throghowt this world in all reygeons abrod,
Reysemelyng the favur of thatt most myght Mahownd;
From Jubyter he desent, and cosyn to the grett God,
And namyd the most reydowndid king Eyrodde,
Wyche thatt all pryncis hath undur subjeccion,
And all there whole powar undur my proteccion."[2]

This extravagant raving was devised on purpose to "make disput." Deny his power, or even contradict his will, and he fell into a paroxism of frenzy, exceedingly delightful to the spectators. To enjoy this diversion the more frequently, a boy was in some pieces furnished with a pig's bladder distended at the end of a stick, and with this he frequently struck "Mahownd's cosyn," "the prince of purgatory," and "grand-duke of hell," while every contortion of his countenance caused the beholders to roar with laughter. This boastful vein, this ludicrous frenzy of the hero, have long ago given rise to a saying, more repeated than understood,—"He outherod's Herod."

The boasting of Herod in the *Ludas Coventriæ* is chiefly remarked for its elaborate alliteration:

" As a lord in ryalte in some regyon so ryche,
And rulere of all remys I ryde in ryal aray:
There is no lord of lond in lordship to me lyche;
Non losstyere, non lessumere, everlestyng in my day.
Of bewte and of boldnes I bere evermore the belle:
Of mayn and of myght I master every man.
I dynge with my dowtynes the devyll downe to helle,
For bothe of hevyn and of herth I am kynge certayn;"

may serve for a specimen of the rest. Here too he swears by "Mahounde," and by "St. Mahounde;" is attended by seneschals, trumpeters, and minstrels; the latter of whom he frequently commands to blow with all his might; and he orders "a merry fit" to be blown whenever he sits down to banquet.[3]

[1] In many of the old mysteries, Herod is made to appear with a falcon on his fist.

[2] Sharpe's Coventry Mysteries, p 98. As very few copies of this curious book were printed, it cannot be said to be published. For this reason, and from its price, it must for ever remain inaccessible to the reading public.

[3] *Ludas Coventriæ*, drama 18. (Cotton MSS. Vesp. D. VIII.)

In the Towneley series the wrath of Herod, as we have already seen, is directed against all who may refuse to obey him and Mahoun; and he commands his nuncio, or herald, to search the whole world for such as may dare to contradict his will; and to bring all before him that they may suffer death.

" If ther be fonden any of tho,
With bytter payn I shalle theym slo;
My messynger, swyth looke thou go
Thrugh ilk countre,
In alle this land, both to and fro,
I commaunde the,
And truly looke thou spyr and spy
In every stede ther thou commys by
Who trowes not on Mahowne most myghty,
Oure God so fre,
And looke thou bryng theym hastely,
Heder unto me.
And I shalle fownd thaym for to flay,
Those laddes that wille not lede oure lay;
Therfor, boy, now I the pray
That thou go tyt.

" *Nuncius.*

" It shalle be done, Lord, if I may,
Withoutten lett;
And, certes, if I may any fynde,
I shalle not leyfe oone of them behynde.

" *Herodes.*

" No, bot boldly thou thaym bynde
And with the leyde;
Mayhowne that weldys water and wynde
The wishe and spede.

" *Nuncius.*

" Alle peasse, lordynges, and hold you stylle,
To I have sayde what I wille,
Take goode hede unto my skylle,
Bothe old and ying;
In message that is commen you tyll
From Herode, the kyng.
He commaundes you everilkon,
To hold no kyng bot hym alon,
And othere God ye worship none
Bot Mahowne so fre;
And if ye do, ye mon be slone;
Thus told he me."

[1] Towneley Mysteries, drama 13.

But in the play of *The Shearmen and Tailors* the object of Herod is a very different one, — to see that no ship touch at any of his ports, nor stranger pass through his dominions, without a tribute of five marks. He thus charges his herald, who has the classical name of *Calcas:*

" And therefore my hareode here, called Calcas,
Warne thou every porte thatt noo schyppis aryve,
Nor elso aleond stranger throg my realme pas,
But the' for there truage do pay markis fyve.
Now spede the' forth hostele!
Far the' thatt wyll the contrare
Apon a galowse hangid schal be,
And, be Mahownde! of me the' gett noo grace.

" *Nuncius.*

" Now, lord and master! in all the haste,
They worethe' wyll it schall be wroght;
And thy ryall cuntreyis schal be past,
In asse short tyme as can be thoght!

" *Herod.*

" Now schall owre regeons throughowt be soght
In eyver place, bothe est and west:
Yff any katyflis to me be broght
Yt schal be nothyng for there best.
And the whyle thatt I do reast,
Trompettis, viallis, and othur armone
Schall bles the wakyng of my majeste."[1]

In the Towneley series we are now introduced to the three kings, — sir Jasper, king of Tars, sir Melchor, king of Araby, and sir Battasar, king of Saba.[2] Each, unknown to the other, has been attracted from his country by the mysterious star, and each arrives on horseback.[3]

" *Primus Rex.*

" Lord, of whom this light is lent,
And unto me this sight has sent,
I pray to thee, with good intent,
From shame me shelde;
So that I no harmes hent
By ways wylde.

1 Shearmen and Tailors' Pageant, in Sharp's Dissertation, p. 101.

2 In the " *Comedie de l'Adoration des Trois Rois,*" by the celebrated Marguerite de Valois, queen of Navarre, the names of the three kings are the same. Let us add, that the incidents are similar.

3 In Michell's " *Mystère de la Conception,*" the incidents are the same, and the language, if we remember rightly, very similar.

Also I pray the specyally
Thou graunt me grace of company,
That I may have som beyldyng by,
In my travaylle;
And, certes, for to lyf or dy
I shalle not faylle,
To that I in som land have bene
To wyt what this starne may mene,
That has me led, with bemys shene,
Fro my cuntre;
Now weynd I wille, with outten weyn,
The sothe to se.

" *Secundus Rex.*

" A! Lord! that is with outten ende!
Whens ever this selcouth light dyscende,
That thus kyndly has me kende
Oute of my land,
And shewyd to me ther I can leynd,
Thus bright shynand?
Certes, I saghe never none so bright,
I shalle never ryst by day nor nyght,
To I wyt whens may com this lyght,
And from what place;
He that it send unto my sight
Leyne me that grace.

" *Primus Rex.*

" A, Sir, wheder ar ye away?
Telle me, good sir, I you pray.

" *Secundus Rex.*

" Certes, I trow, the sothe to say,
None wote bot I;
I have folowed yond starne veray
From Araby.
For I am kyng of that cuntre,
And Melchor ther calle men me.

" *Primus Rex.*

" And kyng, sir, was I wont to be,
In Tars, at hame;
Both of towne and cyte;
Jaspar is my name;
The light of yond starne saghe I thedyr.

" *Secundus Rex.*
" That Lord be lovyd that send me hedyr,
We owe to love hym bothe togedyr,
That it to us wold send.

" *Tercius Rex.*
" A, Lord! in land what may this mene?
So selcouthe sight was never sene,
Siche a starne, shynand so shene,
Saghe I never none;
It gyffys lyght over alle, bedene,
By hym alone.
What it may mene that know I noght,
But yonder ar two, me thynk, in thoght,
I thank hym that thaym heder has broght,
Thus unto me;
I shalle assay if thay wote oght
What it may be.
Lordynges, that ar leyf and dere,
I pray you telle me with good chere
Wheder ye weynd, on this manere,
And where that ye have bene;
And of this starne, that shynys so clere,
What it may mene.

" *Primus Rex.*
" Syr, I say you certanly,
From Tars for yond starne soght have I.

" *Secundus Rex.*
" To seke yond lyght from Araby,
Sir, have I went.

" *Tercius Rex.*
" Now hertely I thank hym for-thy,
That it has sent.

" *Primus Rex.*
" Good sir, what cuntre cam ye fra?

" *Tercius Rex.*
" This light has led me fro Saba;
And Balthesar, my name to say,
The sothe to telle.

" *Secundus Rex.*
" And kynges, sir, ar we twa,
Ther as we dwelle.

" *Tercius Rex.*

" Now, syrs, syn we ar semled here,
I rede we ryde togeder, in fere,
Unto we wytt, on alle manere,
For good or ylle,
What it may mene this starne so clere
Shynand us tylle.

" *Primus Rex.*

" A, lordynges ! behold the lyght
Of yond starne, with bemys bright,
Forsothe I saghe never sich a sight
In no-kyns land ;
A starne thus, aboute mydnyght,
So bright shynand.
It gyfys more light it self alone
Then any son that ever shone,
Or mone when he of son has ton
His light so clene ;
Sich selcouthe sight have I sene none,
What so ever it meyn."

At length they agree that, according to ancient prophecy and the rules of astronomy, it must betoken the birth of some " kayser or kyng ; " nay, greater, since

" Now is he borne that se and land
Shall weyld at wyle.
They rushe to go and worship him, — their guide
Still being the shining star, — and not to rest
Until they reach the place ' where he is borne.' " [1]

In the corresponding play of the *Shearmen and Tailors*, the three kings are more intelligent ; we may add they evince a more accurate knowledge of scripture prophecy :

" *Rex* 1.

" Now blessid be God of his swete sonde !
For yondur a feyre bryght star I do see.
Now is he common us amonge
Asse the profettis seyd thatt yt schuld be.
Aseyd there schuld a babe be borne
Comyng of the rote of Jesse,
To saive mankynd that wasse forlorne ;
And truly comen now ys he !

[1] Sic in orig.

Reyverence and worschip to hym woll I do
Asse God and man thatt made of noght,
All the profettis recordid and seyd evegn soo,
That with his presseos blod mankynd should be boght.
He grant me grace be yonder star that I see
And into thatt place bryng me,
That I ma hym worschipe with umellete
And se hys gloreose face!

" *Rex* 2.

" Owt off my wey I deme thatt I am,
For too cures of thys cuntrey can I nen see.
Now God that an youth madist man,
Send me sum knoleyge where thatt I be!
Yondur me thynke a feyre bryght star I see,
The wyche betocunyth the byrth of a chyld
That hedur ys cum to make men fre;
He borne of a mayde, and sche nothyng defyld.
To worschip thatt chyld ys myn intent:
Forth now wyll I take my wey:
I trust sum cumpany God hath me sent,
For yundur I se a kyng labur on the wey.
Towarde hym now wote I ryde.
Harke, cumly kyng! I you prey
Into what cort wyll ye thys tyde?
Or weddur lyis youre jurney?

" *Rex* 1.

" To seke a chylde is myne intent,
Of whom the profettes hathe ment:
The tyme ys cum, now ys he sent,
Be yondur star here ma you see.

" *Rex* 2.

" Sir, I prey you, with your lysence,
To ryde with you into his precence!
To hym wyll I offur frankinsence,
For the hed of all whole churche schall he be.

" *Rex* 3.

" I ryde wanderyng in weyis wyde,
Over montens and dalis — I wot not where I am.
Now kyng off all kyngs! send me soche gyde,
Thatt I myght have knoleyge of thys cuntreys name!
A! yondur I se a syght besemyng all afar,
The wyche betocuns sum newis, as I troo!
Asse methynke, a chyld perynes in a stare!
I trust he be cum that schall defend us from woo.

To kyngis yondur I see, and to them woll I ryde,
For to have there compane—I trust they wyll me abyde.
Hayle, cumly kyngis augert!
Good surs, I pray you wheddur ar ye ment." [1]

The dialogue of these kings is so stupid we forbear to transcribe the remainder. We revert to Herod and his Nuncius in the Townley Mysteries. The king is in one of his fits:

" *Nuncius.*

" Mahowne, that is of greatt pausty,
My lord, sir Herode, the save and se.

" *Herodes.*

" Where has thou bene so long fro me,
Vyle stynkand lad?

" *Nuncius.*

" Lord, gone youre herand in this cuntre,
As ye me bad.

" *Herodes.*

" Thou lyys, lurdan, the dewille the hang;
Why has thou dwelt away so lang?

" *Nuncius.*

" Lord ye wyte me alle with wrang.

" *Herodes.*

" What tythynges say.

" *Nuncius.*

" Som good som ylle mengyd emang.

" *Herodes.*

" How? I the pray,
Do telle me fast how thou has farne;
Thy waryson shalle thou not tharne.

" *Nuncius.*

" As I cam walkand, I you warne,
Lord, by the way,
I met three kynges sekeand a barne,
Thus can thay say.

" *Herodes.*

" To seke a barne! for what thyng?
Told thay any new tything?

[1] Pageant of the *Shearmen and Tailors*, in Sharp's Dissertation, p. 99, &c.

" *Nuncius.*

" Yey, Lord! thay sayd he shuld be kyng
Of towne and towre;
Forthy thay went, with thare offeryng,
Hym to honoure."

The astonishment of Herod to hear this news, and that there are other kings in the world besides himself; his momentary contempt of the strangers; and his subsequent jealousy of the young lad, are represented with some humour:

" *Herodes.*

" Kyng! the dewille! but of what empyre?
Of what land shuld that lad be syre?
Nay, I shalle with that trature tyre,
Sore shalle he rewe.

" *Nuncius.*

" Lord, by a starne, as bright as fyre,
This kyng thay knew;
It led thaym outt of thare cuntre.

" *Herodes*

" We[1], fy! fy! dewyls, on thame alle thre,
He shalle never have myght to me,
That new borne lad;
When thare wytt in a starne shuld be
I hold thaym mad.
Those lurdans wote not what thay say,
Thay ryfe my hede, that dar I lay,
Ther dyd no tythynges many a day,
Sich harme me to;
For wo my wytt is alle away,
What shalle I do?
Why, what the dewylle is in thare harnes! [2]
Is there wytt alle in the starnes?
These tythynges mar my mode in ernes,
And of this thyng
To wytt the sothe fulle sore me yarnes,
Of this new king.

[1] Probably a corruption of the French *Oui!* from which language the whole piece is manifestly taken.

[2] Evidently for harmes. — Why need I dread the harm *they* can do me, — their knowledge is all in the stars!

Kyng! what the dewylle other then I!
We, fy on dewylls! fy, fy!
Certes, that boy shalle dere aby,
His ded is dight;
Shalle he be kyng thus hastely?
Who the dewylle made hym knyght?
Alas, for shame, this is a skorne,
They fynde no reson thaym beforne,
Shuld that brodelle that late is borne
Be most of mayn?
Nay, if the dewylle of helle had sworne,
He shall agane.[1]
Alas, alas! for doylle and care
So mekylle sorow had I never are,
If it be sothe, for ever mare
I am undoyn!
At good clerkes and wyse of lare
I wylle wytt soyn.[2]
Bot fyrst yit wille I send and se
The answere of those lurdans thre;
Messyngere, tytt hy thou the,
And make the yare[3],
Go byd those kynges com speke with me,
That told thou of are.
Say I have greatt herand thaym tylle.

"*Nuncius.*

"It shalbe done, lord, at youre wylle,
Your byddyng shalle I soyn fulfylle
In ilk cuntre.

"*Herodes.*

"Mahowne the shelde from alle kyns ylle,
For his pauste."

The corresponding passage in the pageant of the *Shearmen and Tailors* is not equal in merit.

"*Nunceos.*

"Hayle lord! most of myght!
Thy commandement ys right.
Into thy land ys comyn this nyght
Thre kyngis, and with them a grett compeny.

1 He shall go, *viz.* shall die.
2 I will soon know from some good clerk, from one wise in learning.
3 And make thee hear, that is, make thyself hear. Listen!

" *Herod.*

" What make those kyngis in this countrey?

" *Nunceos.*

" To seke a kyng and chyld, the' sey.

" *Herod.*

" Of whatt age schuld he be?

" *Nunceos.*

" Skant twellve dayis fulle.

" *Herod.*

" And wasse he soo late borne?

" *Nuncios.*

" E, syr! — soo the schode me thys same day in the morne.

" *Herod.*

" Now, in payne of deyth, bryng them me before!
And therefore, harrode, now hy the' in hast!
In all spede thatt thou were dyght,
Or thatt those kyngis the cuntrey be past!
Loke thou bryng them all thre before my syght!
And in Jerusalem inquere more of that chyld!
But I warne the' that thy wordis be mylde!
For there most thou hede, and crafte wey
How to do for his powere, and those thre kyngis shal be begild.

There is poetry in the reply of the herald: —

Lorde, I am redde att youre byddyng,
To sarve the' ase my lord and kyng!
For joye thereof, loo how I spryng,
With lyght harte and fresche gamboldyng,
Alofte here on this molde![1]

The messenger soon brings the three royal wanderers before his master, who diligently enquires into the purport of their journey. They relate the appearance of the star, the portent it exhibited, and their intention to worship the infant sovereign of " man and beast." In the Townley Mysteries, Herod, not altogether satisfied with their judgment, consults his doctors, who unceremoniously confirm the truth of their prognostication. Herod is in great trouble at the tidings.

[1] Pageant of the *Shearmen and Tailors*, ubi suprà.

"*Herodes.*

"Outt, alas! for doylle I dy,
Long or my day!
Shalle he have more pausty then I?
A waloway!
Alas, alas, I am forlorne!
I wold be rent and alto torne,
Bot look yit, as ye did beforne,
For luf of me;
And telle me where that boy is borne,
Onone let se."

They open the prophecies, and tell him that the king is actually born in Bethlehem. His rage is unbounded:

"*Herodes.*

"The dewille hang you high to dry,
For this tythyng!
And certes ye ly, it may not be.

"*Secundus Consultus.*

"Lord, we wytnes it truly,
Here the sothe youre self may se,
If ye can rede.

"*Herodes.*

"A, walaway! fulle wo is me!
The dewille you spede.

"*Primus Consultus.*

"Lord it is sothe alle that we say,
We fynd it wretyn in our lay.

"*Herodes.*

"Go hens, harlottes[1], in twenty dewille way,
Fast and belyfe!
Mighty Mahowne, as he welle may,
Let you never thryfe.
Alas, wherto were I a crowne?
Or is cald of greatt renowne?
I am the fowlest borne downe
That ever was man;
And namely with a fowlle fwalehon,
That no good can."

[1] This word was originally applied to *men*. In the time of Ben Jonson it was applied indifferently to either sex.

After some other verses of lamentation, he resolved to dissemble with the three kings. He professes much friendship for them, inviting them to return to his court after they have paid their homage to the infant sovereign; but it is only that he may know from them the retreat of our Saviour, and put both him and them to death. They promise to return, and go in search of the young child. The miraculous star re-appears, and conducts them to the place. Here they successively offer their gifts: [1]

" *Primus Rex.*

" Haylle be thou, maker of alle kyn thyng,
That boytt of alle oure baylle may bryng;
In tokyn that thou art oure kyng,
And shalbe ay,
Resayf this gold to myn offeryng,
Prynce, I the pray.

" *Secundus Rex.*

" Haylle, overcomer of kyng and of knyght,
That fourmed fysh, and fowylle in flyght,
For thou art Godes Son most of myght,
And alle weldand;
I bryng the rekyls, as is right,
To myn offerand.

" *Tercius Rex.*

" Haylle, kyng in kythe, cowrand on kne,
Haylle, oone-fold God in persons thre,
In tokyn that thou dede shalbe
By kyndly skylle,
To thy gravyng this myr of me
Resave the tylle." [2]

[1] Towneley Mysteries.

[2] In the pageant of the *Shearmen and the Tailors*, the oblation is made in a similar manner:—

" *Rex* 1.

" Hayle! Lorde thatt all this worlde hath wroght!
Hale! God and man togedur infere!
For thou hast made all thyng of noght,
Albeyt thatt thou lyist porely here!
A cupe full golde here I have the' broght
In toconyng thou art without pere!

" *Rex* 2.

" Hayle be thou! Lorde of my mangnyffecens!
In toconyng of presthod and dygnete of offece,
To the' I offur a cupe full off insence:
For yt behovith the' to have soch sacrefyce."

Their homage being paid, the three kings are preparing to return to Herod, when an angel appears to acquaint them with his intended guile. Hearing this, they speedily returned to their respective countries by different routes.[1]

This silent and unexpected retreat of the strangers fills Herod with disappointment and rage, and leads to one of the most celebrated of the ancient mysteries, —*The Slaughter of the Innocents*. This is the subject of the Towneley series, called *Magnus Herodes*, which may be soon dismissed. The Nuncias appears, and with great pomp enumerates all the countries subject to the sway of Herod.

"Tuskane and Turkey, all Inde and Italy,
Cecyll and Surry drede hym and dowtys,
And hym lowtys.
From Paradise to Padua, to Mount Flascon,
From Egyp to Mantua, unto Kemp Toune,
From Sarceny to Susa, to Grece it abowne;
Both Normandy and Norwa lowtys to his crowne.
His renowne
Can no tong tell: from heven unto hell
Of hym can none spell
But hys cosyn Mahowne."

After this precious display of geographical knowledge, th great potentate himself enters, swearing that whoever makes the least noise during the performance shall be cut into pie-flesh. He is soon told that the three kings had escaped; and his rage knows no bounds. His object is now to seize on the person of the young child; but how discover him? At length

[1] In the Towneley MS. the warning of the angel is thus given: —

"Syrs, curteis kynges! to me take tent,
And turne bytyme, or ye be temyd!
From God himself thus am I sent,
To warne you, as youre faythfull freynd,
How Herode kyng hes malyce ment,
And shapys with shame you for to skeynd.
And so that ye no harmes hent,
By othere ways God wyll ye weynd,
And if ye ask hym boyn
Into your owne cuntre,
For this dede that ye have done,
Youre beyld any wyle he be."

In the Shearmen and Tailors' Pageant: —

"Kyng of Taurus, sir Jaspar!
Kyng of Arraby, sir Balthasar!
Melchor, kyng of Aginare!
To you now am I sent.
For drede of Eyrode, goo you west whom!
Into those partees when ye cum downe,
Ye schal be byrrid with gret reynowne.
The Wholle Gost thus knoleyge hath sent."

he is advised to slay all the male infants of his dominions who are under a certain age; and he is so transported with the suggestion that he promises to make the giver of it "*pope.*" He issues his orders, which are executed; and so pleased is he with three knights who had distinguished themselves in the destruction of infants, that he gives them their choice, whether they will each have a fine and noble damsel to wife, or one hundred thousand pounds.[1]

Having thus summarily dismissed the Towneley drama, we give entire the *Chester* pageant,[2] "De Occisione Innocentum;" and, in the notes, the corresponding passage from two other pieces, the *Shearmen and Tailors'* Pageant, and from *Candlemas-Day*. The latter has been attributed to Jean Parfré (1512), whose name is manifestly French. That a Frenchman was the original author is incontestable from the peculiarity of the language; and that it was translated into English in 1512 may be reasonably inferred.

Herod opens the piece in his usual boasting vein.

" *Herod.*

" Princes, prelates of price!
Barrannes in blamner[3] and bysse,
Beware of me all that be wise,
That weldes all at my will.
Saye no man that anye thing is his
But only at my device,
For all this worlde under me lyes
To spare and eke to spill.

" My subjects all that here bene set,
Barrons, burges, and baronet,[4]
Bees beayne to me, or you Ile beate,
And at my biddinge be.
For leeves all this without let,
That I will doe as I have het
Marrye that mysbegotten marmosett
That stinkes to marr me.[5]

1 Towneley MS. is analysed by Payne Collier, Annals of the Stage, vol. ii. p. 192.

2 The copy of the Chester drama, which we here follow, has once been printed, in Mr. Marchland's excellent treatise on the "Chester Mysteries." As, however, not above fifty copies of the work were printed, for the use of the Roxburgh Club, it cannot be said to be published: it must, in fact, for ever remain inaccessible to the reader.

3 *Blamner*, — query *white* stuffs? *Bysse* is *linen*.

4 *Baronet*, as a word, was in use long before the creation of that dignity by James I.

5 The speech in *Candlemas Day* is less bombastic: —

" Above all kynges under the clowdys cristall,
Royally I reigne in welthe without woo.

"And these false treatours y^t me beheight [1]
To have comen againe the same nighte,

Of plesaunt prosperytie I lakke non at all:
Fortune I fynde that she is not my foo.
I am kyng Herowd, I will it be knowen so,
Most strong and myghty in feld for to fyght,
And to vanquyshe my enemyes that ageynst me do;
I am most bedred with my bronde bryght.

"My grett goddes I gloryfye with gladnesse,
And to honoure them I knele upon my kne,
For thei haye sett me in solas from all sadnesse,
That no conqueroure nor knyght is compared to me.
All the' that rebelle ageyns me, ther bane I will be;

"Or grudge ageyns my godds on hyll or hethe.
All suche rebellers I shall make for to flee
And with hard punyshment putt them to dethe.

"What erthely wretches, whet pompe, and pride,
Do ageyns my lawes, or withstende myne entent,
Thei shall suffre woo and payne thrugh bak and side,
With a very mischance ther fleshe shal be all to rent:

"And all my foes shall here suche commaundement
That they shal be glad to do my byddyn ay,
Or ells thei shal be in woo and myscheff permanent,
That thei shal fere me nyght and day."

Hawkins, Origin of the English Drama, p. 7.

[1] The announcement that the three kings had hastily departed, and the consequent wrath of Herod, are well described in the Pageant of the *Shearmen and Tailors*:—

"*Nuncias.*

"Hayle kynge most worthist in wede!
Hayle manteinar of curtse throgh all the world wyde!
Hayle the most myghtyst that eyver bestrod a stede!
Hayle most manfullest man in armer man to abyde!
Hayle in thyne hoonowre!
These three kyngis that forthe were sent,
And schuld have cum ageyne before the' here present,
Anothur way, Lorde! whan the' went
Contrare to thyn honoure.

"*Erode.*

"Anothur way!—owt! owt! owtt!
Hath those fawls trayturs done me thys ded?
I stampe! I stare! I loke all abowtt!
Myght I them take, I schuld them bren at a glede!
I rent! I rawe! and now run I wode!
A! thatt these velen trayturs hath mard thys my mode!
The' schal be hanged yf I ma cum them to.

[*Here Erode ragis in the pagond and in the strete also.*]

"E! and that kerne of Bedlem, he schal be ded,
And thus schall I do for his profece!
How sey you, Syr Knyghtis? ys not this the best red,
Thatt all yung chyldur for this schuld be dede,—
Wyth sworde to be slayne?

By an other waye have taken there fleight;
This way durst they not take.
Therefore that boy, by God all might,
Shal be slaine soone in height,[1]
And though it be against the right
A thousande for his sake.

"Alas, what purpose had that page
That is young and tender of age,
That woulde bereave my heretage
That ame so mylde[2] of might.
For sooth that shrew was wonderous sage
Against me any warr to wage,
That reched thy balde for all his rage
Shall not reve me my right.

"But scith y^t maye none other bee
But these kings are gone from me,
And that shrew wold have my soveraigntie,
I think to put hym againe.

Then schall I, Erod, lyve in lede,
And all folke me dowt and drede,
And offur to me bothe gold, rychesse and mede?
Thereto wyll the' be full fayme." — *Sharp*, p. 107.

The same scene is thus described in the drama of "Candlemas-Day.' Here, however, the three kings are transformed into three knights.

"*Messanger.*
"My lord, if ye have it in your remembrance
Ther were 3 straunger knyghts but late in your presence,
That went to Bedlem, to offre with due observaunce,
And promysed to come ageyn by you without variaunce;
But by ther bonysten! thei be to you untrue,
For homeward another wey thei do sue.

"*Herod.*
"Now be my grette godds, that be so full of myght,
I will be avengid upon Israell, if this tale be true!

"*Messanger.*
"That it is, my lord, my trouth I you plight!
For ye founde mee never false syn ye me knewe.

"*Herod.*
"I do perceyve, though I be here in my cheff cite
Called Jerusalem, my riche royall town,
I am falsly disceyved by straunge knyghts three.
Therfor, my knyghts, I warne you, without delacion,
That ye make serche thrughout all my region —
Withoute ony tarieng my wille may be sene —
And sla all the children without excepcion
Of to yeers of age that within Israele bene."

[1] Probably *in syght*, as in the Bodleian MS.
[2] No doubt *myckle.*

All the knaves children in this countrie
Shall by his gilt, so mot I thee
Because I knowe not which is hee,
All for his sake shall be slaine.

" How, pritty pratt, my messinger,
Come hither to me without were,
For thou must goe with hasty bere
Into Judy this daye.
After my doughty and comely knights;
And bid them hye with all there mights;
And that the let for no feights,[1]
Bringe them all without delaye.

" *Preco.*

" Yes, my lorde of hye renowne!
To do your hestes I am boune,
Lightly to leape over dale and downe,
And speede yf I were there.
Farewell, my lorde, in majestye;
And ever to dwell in feare!

" *Herodes.*

" Nowe, mighty Mahound be with thee,
And well that thou maye speede!"

The herald soon reaches the knights.

" *Preco.*

" Nowe awake out of your sleepe,
Sir Grymbalde, and sir Launcelet deepe,
And to me you take good keepe,
For hether I ame sente.
My lorde king Herode begynnes to swayne,[2]
And thus bereave him of his crowne,
And soon would have him spend.

" *Primus Miles.*

" Welcome, messinger, that arte so gent!
These tydinges which my lorde hase sent
The bene welcome, verament;
With thee now will I wende.[3]

[1] Probably *freights.*
[2] To swoon.
[3] The knights in this play are much more obsequious than in either of the others. Not the slightest hesitation is shown to obey the king's mandate in regard to the male infants: —

"*Secundus Miles.*

" Messinger, I will in good faye
Wende with you this same day,
To here what my lorde will saye,
Of this matter to make an ende."

All arrive in the presence of Herod, who, to dispose them the more readily to his views, rewards the messenger. This ostentatious liberality has evidently its effect.

"*Preco.*

" Heale comely kynge, sittinge in [illegible]e!
Here bene these knightes comen to thee,
That bene men of greate degree
To here of your talente.

"*Herodes.*

" Messinger, for thy good dede,
Righte well shall I guyte thy meede;
Have here of me, to doe thee speede,
Righte a gaye garment.

"*Preco.*

" Graunte mercy, lorde regent!
Well am I pleased to myne intente:
Mighty Mahounde that I have mente,
Keepe you in this steede!

"*Primus Miles.*

" Sir Launceler deepe, what say yee?
This is the fayrest k[illegible]g that ever I see!

"*Secundus Miles.*

" This day, under the sonne shininge,
Is there none soe seemely a kinge!

"1 *Miles.*

' My lord, ye may be sure that I shall not spare,
For to fulfille your noble commaundement,
With sharpe swerd to perse them all bare,
In all cuntrees that be to you adjacent.

"2 *Miles.*

' And for your sake to observe your commaundement.

"3 *Miles.*

' Not on of them all our hands shall astert.

"4 *Miles.*

' For we woll cruelly execute your judgement
With swerde and spere to perse them thurgh the hert."

Hawkins, vol. i. p. 8.

"*Primus Miles.*

" Heale comely kinge, crowned in goulde,
Eich kinge and keasor kennes at your becke,
If any were that with your grace feight woulde,
Such strockes for your sake full sore shall I sett.

"*Secundus Miles.*

" If hym we may take or gett,
The devill ought hym deth,[1]
And soe he shall be quytt
Such maisteryes for to make.

Seeing their favourable disposition, the king artfully unfolds his design; and to make it the less revolting he appeals to the "docter"—intended for a doctor of laws—as one whose opinion on such a point must have weight with unlearned knights.

"*Herodes.*

" Welcome our knightes that be soe gente!
Now will we tell you our intente,
What is the cause we for you sente
Soe soone and hastely.
Yster day to this city,
When we were in our royalty,
There came to us kings three,
And tolde us theire intente.

" To seeke a child, that borne shoulde be,
That was sayde by pphesye
That should be kinge of Judey
And many an other lande.
We gave them leave to searche and see,
And come againe to this city;
And if he were of such degree,
We woulde not him withstande.

" But and they had comen agayne
All three treatours should a bene slaine,
And also that leither sweayne,
And all for his sake.
Out alas! what maye this bee?
For I knowe not which is hee,
Therfore all knaves' children in this cuntry
One them shall fall the wreake.

[1] The devil owes him his due.

"For we knowe not that childe well,
Though we therfore shoulde goe to hell,
All the children of Israell
I deeme them to be slayne.
Counseller, what is thy read?

"Docter.

"Deemd them, lorde, for to be dead!
For that is best, as eat I breade,
To catch that lither swayne!

"Comaunde your knightes anon in hye
To goe to the lande of Gallaly,
And into the lande of Judey,
To slaye all that they may finde.

"Herodes.

"That was well sayde, my counsellor,
But yet I borne as doth the fyer,
What for wrath, what for ire,
Till this be brought to ende!

"Therfore, my knightes good and keene,
Hast done belive, goe wreake my teene [1],
Goe slaye that shrew, let yt be seene
And you be men of mayne!
Prove manfully what the' bene
That now a waye from you have sleeyen:
Drive down there ———— [2]
And soon that they were slayne!

"Soe shall I keepe that vile conyeon [3]
That thus would reave me of my crowne;
Therfore, my bacheleres, make ye bowne,
And founde to save my righte!
You must hye you out of this towne
To Bethelem as fast as you cane!
All knaves children, by my crowne,
Ye must sleay this nighte!"

But with all his art, he finds his servants not quite so apt as he could wish.

"Primus Miles.

"Alas! lorde and kinge of bless,
Sent you after us for this?
A villany it were, I wyss,

[1] Revenge my trouble or provocation.
[2] The remainder of the line is too gross to be inserted.
[3] Probably a *cony one*, alluding to the simplicity of a rabbit.

For my fellow and me!
If slea a ——— shrew [1]
A lad his head might I hew,
For rybbaths are not in this rowe,
But knightes of greate degree.

" *Secundus Miles.*

" My leeff lorde of greate renowne,
We shall wreake us [2] yf we mone,
Whether he be kinge or champyon,
Styffer than ever Sampson was,
Sickerly I shall drive them downe:
But for to kyll such a conyon,
Me shames sore, by Mahounde
To goe in any place! [3]

[1] The preceding epithet is too gross for insertion.

[2] Probably *you*, viz., We shall revenge *you*, if we can. *Us*, however, may have been used, to identify the interests of the knights with those of their master.

[3] In the *Shearmen and Tailors'* play the reluctance of the knights to execute the cruel commission is more strongly expressed.

" *Myles I*

" My lorde, kyng Erode be name!
Thy wordis agenst my wyll schal be,
To see soo many yong chyldur die, ys schame!
Therefore consell thereto gettes thou non of me!

" *Myles II.*

" Well seyd, fello! my trouth I plyght!
Syr kyng, perseyve right well you may,
Soo grett a murdur to see of yong frute,
Wyll make a rysyng in thin oone cuntrey!

" *Erode.*

" A rysyng!—out! out! out!
[*Then Erode ragis agcyne, and seyth thus —*

Out, velen wrychis! harapon you I cry!
My wyll utterly, loke that it be wroght!
Or upon a gallowse bothe you schall dy,
Be Mahownde most myghtyste thatt me delight hath broght"

The menace has the desired effect; both knights immediately promise compliance.

" *Primus Miles.*

" Now, cruell Erode! syth we schall do the
Your wyll nedefully in this realme must be
All the chyldur of thatt age dy the' must nede,
Now with all my myght the' schall be upsoght!

" *Miles II.*

" And I woll sweyre here upon your bryght swerde
All the chylden thatt I fynd sclayne the' shall be!
Thatt make many a modur to wepe,
And be full sore aferde,
In oure armor bright when the' hus see.

"*Herodes.*

"Ney, ney, it is nether one nor two
That ye shall slea, as mote I goe,
But a thousande, and yet moe,
Takes this in your mynde!
Because I knowe not which he is,
Therfore least you off hym myss,
You must slea for soth I wyss
All that you maye finde!

"You shall walke farr and neere
Into Bethelem, spare for no beere,
All knaves children within two yeare
And one dayes olde:
Slea them downe bouth one and all!
Soe shall you meete with that scall
That would my kingdome cleayme and call
And my my wealth all soe welde.

The humanity of the knight is a very transient feeling.

"*Primus Myles.*

"It shall be donne, lorde in hye,
Shall none be left wytterly;
We shall goe search by and bye
In Bethelem all a boute.
And wreake your teere full tenderly,
Leave none unslayne sickerly:
So shall we soone that shrew destroye,
And keepe him in the rowte."

[*Tunc ibunt milites simul.*]

This knight now seems to address the spectators; for neither he nor his companies were yet departed for Bethlehem.

"Knowes rich you to raye [1]
To Bethelem, that borow I am boune,.
With this speare I think to assaye
To kyll many a small conyon.
If any blabb lipped boyes be in my way,
They shall rue it, by mightie Mahowne!
Though all the world wold saye naye,
I my selfe shall ding them all downe. [2]

"*Erode.*

"Now you have sworne, forth that ye goo,
And my wyll that ye wyrk bothe be day and nyght,
And then will I for fayne trypp like a doo!
But when the' be ded, I warne you bryng hem before my syght!"

[1] In another MS. "*Rewkes, buskes you to away,*" viz., *Rooks* (black messengers, messengers of evil), put on your fatal armour.

[2] In "Candlemas Day," the messenger, named *Walkin*, begs to be made

" If you will wot what I height,
My name is Syr Waradrake the knighte,
Against me dare no man feight,
My dentes they so dreede !
But fayne wold I fight my fill
As fayne as fawcon would flye,
My lord to wreake at his will
And make those dogges for to dye !

" These conyons in their clowts I will kyll,
And stowtely with strokes them destroy :
Shall never one skape, by my will
All babes for that boy full sore shall rew,
Shall never one over passe
Of two yeares age and less ;
And this boy that kinge crowned was
Shall not scape without search."

" *Secundus Myles.*

" And I also without bost,
Though the kinge of Scots and all his host,
Were here, I set not by their best
To dryve them down by deene,
I slue ten thousand upon a day
Of Kempes [1], in their best array,
[There was not one escaped away
My sword it was so keene !

" Therefore to me you take good keepe.
My name is Sr Grymball, Launcherdeepe !
They that me teenen, I lay to slepe
On everych aside.

a knyght, that he may assist the rest in the destruction of the Innocents. Herod promises that if he acquit himself well, his wish shall be gratified on his return.

" *Walkyn.*

" Sir knyghts, I must go forth with you,
Thus my lord commaunded me for to doo ;
And if I quyte me weell whill I am amonge you,
I shal be made a knyght arentrys when I come home."

But with all his hopes, and all his boasting, he is evidently a coward.

" For oon thyng I promyse you, I will fight anon,
If my hart faile not when I shal begynne.
For most I fere is to come amonge women,
For thei fight like devells with ther rokke whan thei spynne."
Hawkins, p. 13.

[1] *Kempes* — soldiers.

I slew of Kempes I understand
More than a hundred thousand!
Both on water and on land
No man dare me abyde!

"Through Bethelem I will springe,
For I must now at your bydinge.
Right all downe shall I dinge
These laddes everych one.
And then that false geldinge[1]
That borne was so younge,
He shall not for nothinge
Away from us gone."

All three return into Herod's presence, to take their leave of him, and to obey his commands.

"*Primus Myles.*

"Farewell, my lorde, and have a good day!
For hardly I dare this saye,
That he shall not escape, by my faye,
And I can finde him out!
Not for no boast, in good fay,
It is not my manere.
I wold I might finde him in my waye,
Samson in his best array,
To look whether I durst affray
To fight with him right here!

"*Herodes.*

"Nay, nay! I knowe well or thou sweare
That thou art a doughty man of war,
And though Samson were here,
Right sone he shall be slayne.
But yet, yet my witt is in a wear,
Whether yee shall fynd that solingere,[2]
But speedes you fast, for my prayer,
And hye you fast again!"

[*Tunc ibunt miletes, et veniet Angelus.*]

An angel is sent to warn Joseph of the approaching danger, and to urge him to flight.

"*Angelus.*

"Josephe arise, and that anon
Into Egipte thou must gone,

[1] Another MS. has *gedlinge*: it should probably be *godlinge*.
[2] Losengere — a flatterer, deceiver.

And Marie also, from your fone,
This is my lordes will.
There staye lest this childe be slaine
Tell I warne thee to come againe;
False Herode would feayne
Jesus for to spill."[1]
[*Tunc ibunt, Angelus cantabit. Ecce Deus ascendit super nubem levem, et ingredientur Egiptum.*]

" *Josephe.*

" A Lorde, blessed maist thou be!
Theither anon we will fleey,
Have we company of thee,
We will hye on our waye.

" *Angelus.*

" Yea company we shall you beare
Till that you be comen there;
Herode lookes hym you to feare
As fast as ever he maye.

" *Josephe.*

" Marie, sister, now we must flitt!
Upon my asse now you must sitt;
Into Egypte till we hitt
The angel will us leade.

" *Maria.*

" Sir, ever more, lowde and still,[2]
Your talent I shall fulfill:
I wott it was my Lorde's will,
He doe as you me reade.[3]

[1] In the pageant of the *Shearmen* and *Tailors*:

" *Angelus.*

" Maré and Josoff! to you I say!
Swete word from the Fathur I bryng you full ryght.
Out of Bedlem into Egypte forth goo ye your way,
And with you take the kyng full of myght,
For drede of Eroddis red."

[2] *Lowde and still*, says Percy, *always*.

[3] " *Josoff.*

" Aryse up, Maré hastely and sone!
Oure Lordis wyll nedys must be done,
Lyke ase the angell us bad.

" *Maré.*

" Mekely, Josoff, myn one spowse,
Towarde that cuntrey let us reypayre!
Att Eygyp sum tocun off howse.
God grant hus grace saff to cum there!"
Play of the Shearmen and Tailors, p. 109.

"*Angelus.*

"Come now forth in Gode's name!
I shall you sheilde from all shame,
And you shall see, my leefe, dame,
A thing to your likeinge.
For Mahometts, bouth one and all,
That men of Egypte Godes cane call,
At your cominge downe shall fall,
When I begyne to singe." 1

[*Tunc ibunt, et Angelus cantabit.* —*Ecce Deus ascendit super nubem levem, et ingredientur Egiptum, et movebantur simulacra Egipti a facie Domini exercitum, et si fieri poterit, cadet aliqua statua sive imago.*]

The knights are again introduced, and now commences the massacre. But, sad as the subject is, our ancestors were careful to enliven it by coarse jests and broad buffoonery. No Billingsgate lady of these days has a more fluent tongue than the old wives of Herod's.

"*Primus Miles.*

"Hast downe, fellowes! hast dowre! hast downe fast,
That these quaynes were downe cast,
And there children in hast,
And kyll them all to clowtes!

"*Secundus Miles.*

"Yea, sir, we dwell all to longe,
Therfore goe we them amonge;
They proper to have some wronge
That gone soe fost awaye.

"*Prima Mulier.*

"Whom callest thou quayne, scabed bitche!
Thy dam, thy dafter[2] was never such,
She borned a knave ech stiche,
Yet did I never none.

"*Secunda Mulier.*

"Be thou so hardy, I thee behett,
To handle my sonne that is so sweete,

1 In "Candlemas-Day" the same portent is predicted. Having given the warning to flee, the Angel proceeds:

"Ther shall he shewe in that region
Diverse myracles of his high regalye:
In all ther temples, the mawments shall falle down."
Hawkins, p. 14.

2 *Doighter*, in Bodleian MS.

This distaff and thy head shall meete,
Or we hense gone! [1]

" *Primus Miles.*

" Dame abyde, and let me see
A knave's childe yf that it be,
The kinge has commanded me
All such for to areast.

" *Prima Mulier*

" Arest! ribbott, for thee!
Thou lyes by my lewtie,[2]
Therefore I red fast that thou flee,
And let me have my peaces!

" *Secunda Mulier.*

" Say, rotten hunter, with thy goade!
Stibbon stallon, stickt tode!
I red that thou no wronge us bode,
Less thou beaten be!
Whereto sholde we lenger fode,
Lay we on them large loade,
Their basenets be big and broad,
Beate on, now lets see!

" *Secundus Miles.*

" Dame, thy sonne, in good faye,
He must off me learne a playe;
He must hopp, or I goe away,
Upon my speare end!"

But women's braggart words and cowardly hearts are proverbial: the very next verse shows that the *prima mulier*, or first woman, was bereaved of her son.

" *Prima Mulier.*

" Out! and out! and wayle awaye!
That ever I dyd abyd this daye!
One strocke yet I will assaye
To geve, or that I wend.

[1] The scene in "Candlemas-Day" is somewhat different from that in the text. Poor Walkyn is made a coward for disport:

" 1 *Miles.*
" Harke, ye wyffys!"

[2] Another MS., *bewtie.* The word, however, has no such meaning. It is a corruption of *loyaute*, faith or truth. Every page that we transcribe tends to deepen our conviction that *all* our old mysteries were derived from the French.

"*Secunda Mulier.*

"Out! out! out! this theefe!
My love! my lorde! my leefe!
Did never man nor woman greeff
To suffer such tormente!
But wroken I will be
Have here one! two! or three!
Beare the kinge this from me,
And that I yt hym sente!

"*Primus Miles.*

"Come hether to me, dame Parnell,
And shew me here thy sonne snell![1]
For the kynge hath bidden me quayle
All that we fynde mone.

"*Prima Mulier.*

"My sonne! new stronge theeffe!
For as I have good proff,
Doe thou my childe any greff,
And I shall crake thy crowne!

[*Tunc miles transfodiet primum puerum et super lanceam accipiet.*]

"Out! out! and woes me!
Theff! thou shal be hanged hye!
My childe is dead, now I see,
My sorrowe maye not cease!
Thou shalt be hanged on a tree,
And all thy fellowes with thee!
All the men in this contree
Shall not make thy peace!

"Have thou this, thou foule harlott!
And thou knighte to make a knott,
And one buffet with this boote,
Thou shalt have to boot.
And thou this! and thou this!
* *
And if you think we do amiss,
Goe, buskes you to [3]meete."[4]

[1] *Snell*, immediately.
[2] The line is too gross.
[3] *Moote*, Bodl.
[4] The above scene is thus described in the pageant of the *Shearmen and Tailors.* There is something picturesque as well as natural in the entrance of the women with their infants: —

[*Here the wemen cum in wythe there chyldur, syngyng them.*]

The next scene shows us that Herod's own son was kille by mistake with the rest: —

"*Woman I.*
"I lolle my chylde wondursly swete,
And in my narmys I do hyt kepe,
Becawse thatt yt schuld not crye.

"*Woman II.*
Thatt babe thatt ys borne in Bedlem so meke,
He save my chyld and me from velany!

"*Woman III.*
"Be styll! be styll! my lyttull chylde!
That Lorde of Lordis save bothe the' and me
For Erode hath sworne with wordis wyld
Thatt all yong chyldur solayne the' schal be.

"*Myles I.*
"Sey ye wyddurde, wyvis, whyddur ar ye awey?
What beyre you in youre armis nedis must we se.
Yff the' be man chyldur, dy the' must this dey,
For at Eroddis wyll all thyng must be!

"*Myles II.*
"And I in hendis wonys them hent:
Them for to sley noght woll I spare,
We must fullfyll Erodis commandement
Elis we be asse trayturs, and cast in care.

"*Woman I.*
"Syr knyghtis! of youre curtessee
Thys dey schowe not youre chevaldre,
But on my chyld have pytté,
For my sake in this styde!
For a sympull sclaghtur yt were to sloo,
Or to wyrke soche a chyld woo,
Thatt can nodur speyke nor goo,
Nor neyvur harme did

"*Woman II.*
"He thatt sleyis my chyld in syght,
Yff thatt my strokis on hym ma lyght,
Be he skwyar or knyght,
I hold hym but lost.
Se, thow fawls losyngere!
A stroke schalt thou beyre me here,
And spare for no cost.

"*Woman III.*
"Sytt he neyvur soo hy in saddull
But I schall make his braynis addull!
And here with my pott ladull
With hym woll I fyght:
I schall ley on hym athog I wode were
With thys same womanly geyre.
There schall noo man steyre
Wheddur thatt he be kyng or knyght.

"*Myles I.*
"Who hard eyver soche a cry
Of wemen thatt thare chyldur have lost?
And grettly reybukyng chewaldry
Throghout this reme in eyvery cost,
Wyche many a man's lyff ys lyke to cost.
For thys grett wreyche that here ys done
I feyre moche wengance that off woll cum.

"*Secundus Miles.*

"Dame, shew me thy childe there!
He must hopp upon my speare
*   *   *   *[1]
I must teach him a playe!

"*Secunda Mulier.*

"Nay, freke! thou shalt faile!
My childe shalt thou not ass-ayle!
*   *   *   *
*   *   *   *[2]
Be thou so hardy stock and tode
To bydd any wrong bode
For all thy spear or thy goede
I redd you doe but good!
For and thou doe me any harme,
Or my childe uppon my arme,
I shall found to keep thee warme,
Be thou never so wrod[3]
[*Tunc secundus Miles transfodiet secundum puerum.*

"*Myles II.*

"E, brothur! soche talis may we not tell!
Wherefore to the kyng lett us go,
For he ys lyke to beyre the pell,
Wyche wasse the cawser that we did soo,
Yett must the' all be broght hym to,
With waynis and waggyns fully fryght:
I tro there wol be a carefull syght.

The knights arrive with their trophies in the presence of their royal master.

"*Myles I.*

"Loo, Eyrode kyng! here most thou see
How many ALL that we have slayne!

"*Myles II.*

"And nedis thy wyll fullfyllid must be,
Here ma no mon say there ageyne."

The king soon finds that his cruelty has been unprofitable

"*Nuncios*

"Evrode, king! I schall the' tell,
All thy dedis ys cum to noght.
This chyld ys gone into Eygipte to dwell.
Loo, syr, in thyn one land what wondurs byn wroght!

"*Erod.*

"Into Eygipte! alas for woo!
Lengur in lande here I canot abyde.
Saddull my palfrey! for in hast wyll I goo.
Aftur yondur trayturs now wyll I ryde,
Them for to sloo.
Now, all men hy fast,
Into Eygipte in hast!
All thatt cuntrey woll I tast,
Tyll I ma cum them to."

[1] The line too gross for insertion.
[2] Two lines omitted for the same reason.
[3] *Woode*, Bodl.

"Out! out! out! out!
You shal be hanged the route,
Theeifes be ye never so stowte!
Full fowle you have done.
This childe was taken to me
To looke too: theifes who bene yee
He was not myne, as you shall see
He was the kinge's sonne!
I shall tell, while I maye drye,
His child was slaine before myne eye;
Theeffes! you shal be hanged hye,
Maye I come to his hall!
But, or I goe, have thou one,
And thou on other, sir John;
For to the kinge I will anon,
To playnte upon you all.

["*Tunc ibit ad Herodem*," *says the stage direction.*]

She hopes to procure the destruction of the murderers.

"Soe, lorde, looke and see!
The childe that thou toke me,
Men of thine owen meany
Have slaine it, here they bene!

But the king blames *her* only for not warning the men that the child was *his* son. His trouble, however, is not very great.

"*Herodes iratus.*

"Fye, Noore, fye! God gyve thee pine!
Why did thou saye[1] that childe was myne,
But it is vengeance, as drinke I wyne,
And that is now well seene."[2]

She excuses herself as well as she can.

"*Secunda Mulier.*

"Yes, lorde, they see well a righte
Thy sonne was like to have bene a knighte,
For in goulde harnes he was dighte,
Paynted woundrous gaye.
Yet was I never soe sore afreighte
When they theire speares through him thright:
Lorde, so littell was my mighte
When the begane to praye!

[1] The Bodleian has the better reading,—"Whi diddent thou *not* saye?"

[2] This incident, viz. that of the nurse coming to acquaint Herod with the murder of his own son among the rest, is to be found in the "Comedie des Innocens," by the celebrated *Marguerite de Valois*, queen of Navarre who borrowed it from preceding mysteries.

"*Herodes.*

"He was righte sicker in silke araye,
In goulde and pearle that was soe gaye;
The mighte well knowe, by his araye,
He was a kinges sonne.
What the devill in this to saye?
Why were thy wittes soe awaye?
Could thou not speake, could thou not praye,
And saye, yt was my sonne?"

But if Herod is easily consoled for the death of his son, he is suddenly oppressed with an inward apprehension that his days are near their close, and that his doom is fixed for eternity.

"Alas, what the devill is this to meane?
Alas, my dayes bene now done!
I wott I must dye soone:
Bootlesse is me to make mone,
For dampned I must bee!
My legges rotten and my armes,
I have done soe many harmes,
That now I see of feendes swarmes,
From Hell cominge for mee.

"I have done so much woo,
And never good sith I might goe,
Therfore I see cominge my foe
To fetch me to hell.
I bequeath here in this place
My soule to be with Sathanas;
I dye now, alas, alas,
I maye no longer dwell!" [1]
[*Tunc faciet signum quasi morietur, et nemet Demon.*]

The devil is somewhat more considerate for the souls of the spectators than might be expected from his character.

"*Demon.*

"Ware! ware! for now unwarely walkes you wo; [2]
For I am swyfter then *was* the row; [3]
I am comen to fetch this lorde you froe,
In wo ever to dwell.

[1] In "Candlemas Day" Herod is represented as more touched with remorse than in the Chester or the Coventry Mystery:

"Oute! I am madde! my wyttes be nei gone!"

[2] "Warre, warre, for now unwakely wakes your woo," in the Bodleian.
[3] *Is.*

And with this croked camroke your backes will sclo,
And all false beleevers I borne an,
That from the crowne of the head to the too,
I leave no right wholl fell.

" From Lucifer that lorde hether am I sente
To fetch this kinges soule here psente
In to hell bringe hym, stere to be lent
Ever to live in woo.
There fier bornes blow and brente,
He shall there be this lorde verament;
His place ever more therein is hente,
His body never to goe froe.

" No more shall you that tryspasse by my lewty,
That filles there measures falsely,
Shall beare this lorde company,
The get non other grace.
I will you bringe thus into woo,
And come agayne and fetch moe
As fast as I may goe;
Farewell tell on other day." [*Exit Demon.*]

Joseph and Mary are miraculously warned of their persecutor's death, and, in compliance with the divine command, they return into Judea.

" *Angelus.*

" Josephe arise, and that in hye,
For dead is now your enemy;
Take Jesu the childe and eke Marie
And wende into Judey.
Herode that woulde have had you slaine,
He is marred might and mayne;
Therfore hye you home againe,
In peace now you shal be.

" *Joseppe.*

" A Lorde thou madest all of nought,
It is skill thy wil be wroughte;
Now is he dead that us hath soughte,
We shal never cease,
Tell that we againe be
At home in our country;
Now hope we well to live in lee,
And in full greate peace.

"Marie, sister, we must goe
To our lande that we come fro,
The angell hath byden us goe,
My owne deare sweete.
One my asse thou shalte sitte and be,
And my mantle under thee;
Full easily sister, leave thou me,
And that I thee behett.

"*Maria.*

"I thanke you, sir, as I cane;
Helpe me that I were upon;
He that is bouth God and man
Helpe us in this tyde.

"*Joseppe.*

"Come hether, deare hearte roote,
I shall soone be thy boote;
Thou shalte soone ride ech foote
And I will goe by thy syde.

"*Angelus.*

"Now you bene ready for to goe,
Joseppe, and Marie alsoe:
Forsooth I will not pte you froe,
But help you from your foe.
And I will make a melody,
And singe here in your company,
A worde was sayde in prophesie
A thousand yeares agoe."

[*Ex Egipto vocavi Filium meum, ut salvum faciat populum meum.*]

In the preceding dramas, the reader must frequently have been struck with the foreign idioms that run through most of them. This circumstance, coupled with the proofs of identity pointed out in a few places, is presumption enough that all were derived from the French. But in some of the pieces there are speeches remaining in the original language. Thus in the sixth of the Chester series, — *De Salutatione et Nativitate Salvatoris,* Augustus Cæsar addresses his barons and knights: —

"Seigneurs tous si assemblés!
Aule's proles estates!

Jey posse faire larment et leez
Et metten en languore.
Vous toutes si prest me sortes
De fayre intentes movolentes,
Car Jhesu soveraigne bene sages
Et demaund emperour," &c.

Again, in the *Shearmen and Tailors'* pageant, the herald who precedes Herod thus speaks: —

" Taytes pair, domngis Carenys de grande reynoune!
Payis, seneoris scheraleris de nooble posance!
Pays, gratis homos companconys petis egrance!
Je vos command dugard treytus sylance!
Paylis, tanque votteu nooble roie syre ese peresance!
Que nollis persone ese non fawis —— [1]
Nese harde de frappas, magis gardus dedlferance
Magis gardus voter sevecr to cor reyverance;
Car elat votteu roie tuto puyoance.
Anon, &c. lev pose, tos je vose cummande,
E lay voie Erott — la, grandeaboly vos umpert!"

And in another piece, Herod concludes — " I can no more French!"

What inference is to be drawn from these circumstances, other than this, — that as the piece was translated or altered from the French, some passages were left in the original to make a greater impression on the multitude, who always most admire what they least understand? A comparison between our three great series of miracle plays, and the numerous French mysteries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, — mysteries which can be found only in the great public libraries of France, — would, we are confident, satisfy the most sceptical that, though the *manner* and a few of the incidents in those series are English, the *substance* is foreign.

We shall give but one more specimen from our ancient mysteries, and that will be from the Chester series, — *De Adventu Antichristi,* which is yet in MS. On the subject of Antichrist there are many dramas in the French language, from which we have no doubt the following is taken. It is in many respects a most singular piece. So free is the language, that we might reasonably entertain doubts of its having

[1] The word is so corrupted and so abbreviated, that we can make nothing of it. In fact, the whole of both passages is corrupted. It would not, however, be difficult to give the translation, if that were necessary.

ever been performed, were not the fact unquestionable. There is, indeed, in the foreign dramas on the same subject, sufficient latitude of expression; but in none that we have seen are the authors so daring. Yet that they were dictated by the most sincere, however mistaken, piety, is evident from the catastrophe.

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